



Office of Equal Opportunity

Fostering Small Business participation on Council contracts/subcontracts

Conducted for Small Businesses Programs

By Small Business Engagement and Development unit

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SECTION 1: SUMMARY OF SURVEY

This report summarizes data collected from Certified Small Businesses survey. The purpose of the survey was to collect relevant information that will help the Metropolitan Council make targeted improvements to the Small Business Programs, outreach and support services. Therefore, the overall goal of the survey is to identify small businesses barriers and needed assistance that maximize small business participation in Metropolitan Council's local and federal contracting opportunities. As a government agency, the Metropolitan Council is committed to utilizing businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals in its procurement and contracting activities. To backing that commitment, the Council facilitates the following two small business programs.

- The Disadvantaged Business Program (DBE) for contracts and procurements made with federal money.
- The Metropolitan Council Under-utilized Business Program (MCUB) for contracts and procurements made with local money.

SECTION 2: HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

The survey was administered by the Office of Equal Opportunities from July 7, 2021, until July 27, 2021. An invitation to participate in the survey was sent by e-mail from the Small Businesses Engagement and Development unit to 2058 certified small businesses that include Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs), Targeted Group Business (TGBs), Veteran-Owned Businesses and CERT Minority or Woman owned – Certified by the City of St. Paul Central Certification Program. All these recipients of the survey invitation were small businesses that are owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, women, or service-disabled veterans. Recipients of the survey are businesses that specialize different type of industries that include:

- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
- Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction
- Utilities
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, and Book Stores
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Information
- Finance and Insurance
- Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services
- Educational Services
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Other Services (except Public Administration)
- Public Administration

After sending an initial email invite to a survey on July 7 until the survey closing date July 27, a total of 346 (17%) survey responses were received. During the survey open time, two follow-up emails were sent out to contacts that were not able to complete the survey yet.

SECTION 3: SURVEY DESIGN

The survey contained 7 questions: 1 demographic question to capture respondent’s business name, 4 multiple choice questions and 2 open-ended questions. On the demographic question, we asked respondents’ business name to ensure the council contact them for any assistance they requested in the survey. The survey was formatted and delivered as an electronic survey to be completed online with Microsoft Forms. To protect the confidentiality of small businesses and their responses, all submissions were anonymous.

The survey was designed to measure small businesses insights in three areas: (1) knowledge of finding contract opportunities with the Met Council; (2) barriers they face in bidding on a Met Council project; and (3) any technical assistance or training they would like to see the Council offer that could support the success of their business.

List of survey questions includes:

- Question # 1: Biasness Name
- Question # 2: Do you know how to find contracting opportunities with the Met Council?
- Question # 3: Have you ever bid as a prime and/or subcontractor for a Met Council project?
- Question # 4: If yes, were you awarded the work?
- Question # 5: What barriers do you face in bidding on a Met Council project?
- Question # 6: List any technical assistance or training you would like to see the Council offer that could support the success of your business.
- Question # 7: Are you interested in participating in the Mentor Protégé program?

RESULTS

This section provides a general snapshot of the small businesses program survey. Following are a breakdown of questionnaires and responses.

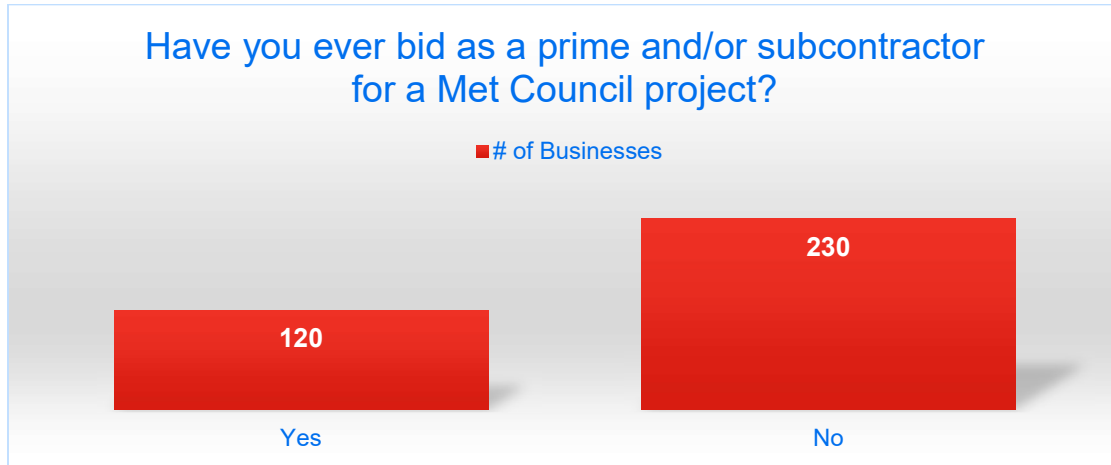
1. Knowledge of finding contracting opportunities



Key Findings

Data clearly indicates that the number of small businesses that do not know how to find contracting opportunities was higher than those they do. 56% of all respondents have expressed the lack of knowledge they embrace when it comes to finding contract opportunities with the Met Council versus 43%.

2. Bidding experience



Responses confirmed that majority of respondents have not had any experience of bidding on council project/contract as a prime or subcontractor.

3. Winning projects



Key findings: In this survey question number 3, we asked those 120 businesses that responded “Yes” to questionnaire number two to find out if they were awarded projects. As a result, 80 or 67% small businesses were awarded at least one or more projects.

4. Barriers to bidding on a Met Council project

In this open-ended question, small businesses were asked to identify barriers they face when bidding on a met council project. Of 318 responses, the most identified barriers were:

- ❖ Lack of knowledge on how and where to find contract opportunities
- ❖ Finding applicable work scopes
- ❖ Lack of resources
- ❖ None
- ❖ Council projects are too big
- ❖ Competing with large firms
- ❖ Council communication issues
- ❖ Required paperwork and forms
- ❖ Fairness in procurement

Here is selection of comments from survey participants about barriers they face when bidding:

- *Finding prime consultants teams to join; knowing about RFPs before their posted to better position our company on teams; time needed to pull a full proposal together especially if the turnaround time from posting to due date is less than a month.*
- *I don't know where to access bidding information for Professional and Technical Services area*
- *navigating the system, knowing how to put together a winning proposal, building partnerships with subcontractors, the size of the proposal*
- *Contracts are large and mostly conducive to the large, multi-discipline firms. Also, many projects come through the Master Services Agreements which, again, are geared towards large, multi-discipline firms.*
- *Met Council - as a small company, they recommend we go under a large company to bid. They don't recommend small businesses. The bar is very high and difficult to get job directly as a small business.*
- *Never heard back one way or another. Award was supposed to be made in April or May. Heard nothing at all. Really poor communications relies sole on the system with very little H2H contact. Again, seems like one big bureaucracy which has gate keepers who know very little about the services they are procuring. I am sure it was designed for the large MET projects i.e., engineering construction etc. not necessarily professional services not related to engineering, constructions etc.*
- *We have attempted to meet with Met Council staff to let staff know about us and to find out more about when contracts for our business will come out and so far no one has agreed to meet with us. We had heard years back about an upcoming opportunity, but never saw it come out. Our only work for Met Council is as a subcontractor.*
- *Not pre-qualified as the company through the selection process in 2014. Have not been invited to submit a proposal since. As a company, we have worked on numerous previous Met Council jobs, from Central Corridor (as the lead drainage engineer) to SW LRT, and "C", "D", and Orange line BRTs. Also is active with MnDOT large projects as a prime or as a sub. Trying to be part of Metro Transit's consulting pool.*
- *Not all Primes send bid solicitations for every Met Council project; Difficult to compete against larger competitors who have price advantages*
- *It is challenging for small firms to assemble robust RFP packages with limited resources (i.e. staffing, no dedicated marketing staff).*
- *It's hard to know when we have not been awarded any projects.*
- *I tend to shy away from responding to RFPs simply because in my experience the organization soliciting the bids already has their mind made up and is going to award the contract to the larger companies*
- *The short period of response time used in the ask needs to be expanded. Letting us know in advance, weeks or months before that an RFP will be issued allows us time to prepare.*
- *Systemic and structural racism baked into the how the Met Council does its business.*

- *A lot of them have nothing to do with my industry even though I have set up alerts to receive my industry, and I keep getting emails to bid on construction projects when I am not a contractor.*
- *Lack of bid history to gauge pricing. Lack of connecting with project managers and understanding of which contractors has met their MBE, DBE goals and understanding that we can help the meet their goals. Another barrier is how the bid items are bundled together.*
- *There are a lot of extra forms and steps required when performing on a Met Council project. Such as, your pay applications are different than industry standard AIA G702 or G703, or the lengthy delay in processing change orders*
- *Prime contractors are greedy, selfish and generally don't care about working with small MBE DBE VBE Vendors if they can figure out a way not to.*

For detail responses, see Appendix – A on page 10-17 of this report

5. Need of technical assistance/trainings

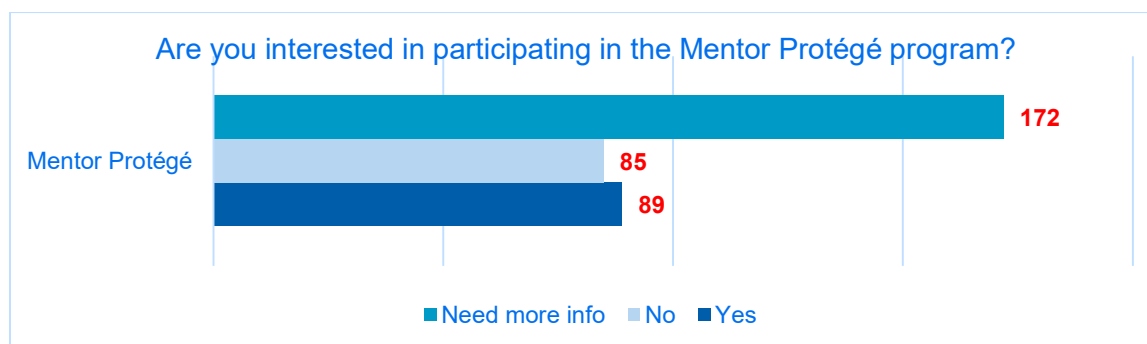
The second open-ended question was asked to learn the types of technical assistance or trainings that small businesses would like to see the Met Council offer. 227 participants responded and have recommended the following top selection of technical assistances/trainings:

- No need (None)
- Bidding assistance/training
- Business development training
- Estimating
- How to find opportunities
- Not sure
- Meet & greet
- Networking
- Notification of opportunities
- Have small projects
- RFP process

Detailed responses by small businesses to the need of technical assistance/training questions are provided in Appendix B on page 18-24 of this report.

6. Interest in participating the Mentor Protégé program

Finally, the last question (Q6) asked respondents to express their interest in the Mentor Protégé Program. The program is designed to help a small business team up with a large business and use the large business’s experience and resources, to aid in their own development and to assist their entry into the council projects. Out of the 346 total respondents, 50% mentioned they need more information about the program, 25.7% were interested in the program, while 24.5% were not interested in the program.



Respondents' scope of work

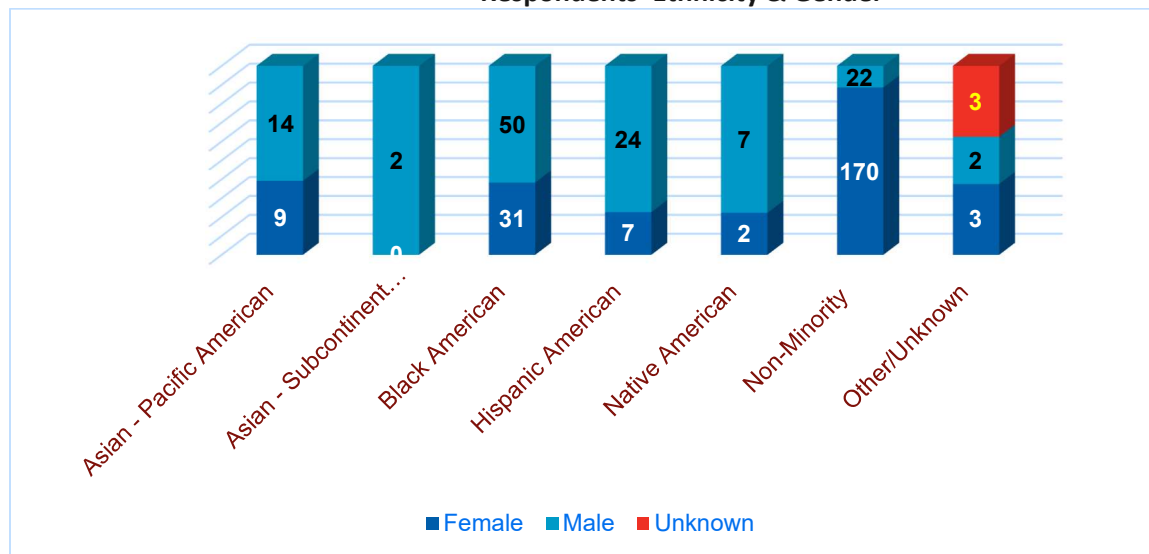
Total number of respondents: 346

Accounting	3
Administrative Management and General Management Consulting Services	35
Architectural Services	12
Auto Body Shop	1
Computer Related Services	1
Construction	63
Design Services	3
Drafting services	1
Educational Services	8
Electrical Services	17
Employment Placement Services	2
Engineering Services	13
Environmental Services	10
Equipment Merchant Wholesalers	1
Family services	2
Financial Services	1
Food Services	1
Furniture Store	3
Graphic Design Services	8
Health care services	16
Human Resources Consulting Services	4
HVAC	3

Information technology	16
Janitorial services	7
Landscape Architectural Services	4
Landscaping Services	5
Legal Services	2
Mailing services	1
Management Consulting Services	7
Manufacturing	4
Marketing Consulting Services	22
Moving services	1
Other	8
Photography	4
Printing services	13
Public Relations	2
Real Estate	5
Residential and Commercial	7
Retail Store	5
Surveying Services	3
Telecommunications Services	1
Translation services	1
Transportation Services	3
Trucking	14
Waste Collection	1
?	2

The following table shows the demographic composition of the survey respondents

Respondents' Ethnicity & Gender



Conclusions/Recommendations

The survey indicates that the biggest barriers to increasing participation of DBE/MCUB firms on a Met Council contracts/projects are lack of knowledge on how/where to find contracts, finding applicable work that fits their NAICS codes, lack of resources, council projects are too big and their capacity to compete with large contractors. The survey has highlighted several key considerations on how met council can improve small businesses' barriers which can be summarized as follows:

Action Plan & Recommendations:

- ❖ Develop Equity Lens Tool
- ❖ Implement oversight and support
- ❖ Focused outreach & engagement/Informational sessions (connect businesses w/opportunities)
- ❖ Continue meet and greet sessions with business units
- ❖ Work with business units on project delivery strategies (small projects)
- ❖ Mentor Protégé Event/foster relationships
- ❖ Provide bid history that helps small businesses gauge pricing
- ❖ Communication with small businesses/Bias against small businesses
- ❖ Bidding & estimating training & technical assistance
- ❖ Build capacity for small businesses in areas where there is need
- ❖ Utilize best practices that have yielded success
- ❖ Engaging with small businesses in advance of RFP advertisements

Appendix - A

What barriers do you face in bidding on a Met Council project?

Paperwork

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Too much paperwork. You have to have an insider to be aware of opportunities.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Paperwork and know what forms to fill out to ensure the bid is submitted correctly.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A lot of paperwork and requirements</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The endless pages one has to go through to find anything. Then the endless paperwork involves make us walk away because if one has to complete, their business mght not be there when done. Even when I paid someone 5k to complete, there was no return because there are no healthcare contracts anyways and I keep getting DOT emails to bit contracts. Given how much paperwork we go through to even be members, one will think the State can make the effort to even send just relevant emails to us. nope, it just pours like a fountain even though none are applicable to me!!</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are small (6FTE) and do interior remodeling construction. Mostly Kitchen's and Bathrooms. The prime contractors that call us are looking to "check a box" and say they have reached out to a certified disadvantaged business. But no business our size has the overhead or skills to fill out the paperwork required to bid on these job and then wait to hear if it was awarded or not. We would love to work with the city, but it is evident their is more lip service from the large Primes than actual focus on working with small businesses.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The bids are time consuming. In addition, the one project I bid on, the contract manager was unwilling to share a budget so it was very hard to know how to scale the project appropriately.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Too timely to bid for the likelihood of receiving a contract.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>insurance, a number of projects too large, Certified payroll is a mess</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>red tape</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The endless pages one has to go through to find anything. Then the endless paperwork involves make us walk away because if one has to complete, their business mght not be there when done. Even when I paid someone 5k to complete, there was no return because there are no healthcare contracts anyways and I keep getting DOT emails to bit contracts. Given how much paperwork we go through to even be members, one will think the State can make the effort to even send just relevant emails to us. nope, it just pours like a fountain even though none are applicable to me!!</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I believe there was an RFP once - that was quite extensive. For a small business with a small number of employees, it can be challenging to find the time to fill out an extensive RFP.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>1) time it takes to research about potential opportunities, 2) time it takes to respond. We do not have staff dedicated to proposal writing, so ROI on the time spent is low. We lost bids in the past and never understood what we could do to improve our chances. Seems that the nature of our business lends itself to more "relational" approach to getting contracts from any gov't agency.</i>

Cash Flow

- *cashflow, waiting until the end of the project to get paid.*
- *Not enough cash flow*

Lack of knowledge/where to find

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lack of knowledge.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>lack of knowledge of process</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lock of misunderstand and lock of Knowledge!</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lack of knowledge</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No knowledge</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lack of knowledge on where/how to find opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I'm not always sure where to find postings for opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding contracts that are within my scope</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I guess I am not sure how to find out about available projects to bid on</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding opportunities to bid and template for bidding.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Since there are multiple portals to finding projects, it's hard to keep up with all the portals when you are a small business and wear many hats. We don't have a lot of time to search EVERY portal and the opportunities listed are rarely projects that fit our expertise.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>finding RFP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding projects that have DBE goals.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where to find projects</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Relevance to our industry, ease to find the jobs, and largely SDVOSB is not a target group on very many jobs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not sure where to find your project opportunities or unaware of them.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am unsure how to find about requests for proposals.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding opportunities that don't require an agency (my business is graphic design services).</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We have attempted to meet with Met Council staff to let staff know about us and to find out more about when contracts for our business will come out and so far no one has agreed to meet with us. We had heard years back about an upcoming opportunity, but never saw it come out. Our only work for Met Council is as a subcontractor.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>finding opportunities that fit my business and understanding some of the requirements of submitting a proposal</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Unclear how to access; bids are not easily sorted to find applicable contract opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding projects for architectural services. It seems that almost all projects I hear about are construction projects.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Knowing what opportunities are available for media buying, public relations and other communications</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Determining the exact produce/service needed.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I don't know anything about it, and not sure our firm (public policy consulting) would ever be relevant to the Met Council's needs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Project insight, scope, and contingencies</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do not where to find and once I for get are never in my field.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Never had the opportunity or know the process of bidding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understanding the process.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Don't know</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>locating them</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mostly time and lack of understanding of what is available.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I wasn't aware of Met Council Projects</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding how to procure the bidding opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where to find the listings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>finding out who manages vehicle repairs and service (auto body)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do not know where to find the bid which applies to printing or distributors of giant rolls, Envelopes etc.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I don't know how to find contracting opportunities.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding scopes of work that matches my naics code.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Primary barrier is not knowing how to find what is planned before it is posted.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding prime consultants teams to join; knowing about RFPs before their posted to better position our company on teams; time needed to pull a full proposal together especially if the turnaround time from posting to due date is less than a month</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are an experienced video production company, certified as a WBE/SBE vendor for the State. Our biggest barrier would be Awareness of bid opportunities.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Awareness regarding opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Getting bid opportunities?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Teaming opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not seeing the opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learning about bid opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are an IT Staff Augmentation firm. We have not received any opportunities for IT contractors at Met Council. Not sure if there is a vendor list.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>knowing what the opportunities are, and it seems like they are hidden not for the Met Council but for the entire system</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Minimal opportunities for smaller projects to bid on as the prime consultant</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Limited opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Awareness of opportunity, process, expectations of submission</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Avenues and who to talk to</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>not knowing what bid opportunity are out there</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Don't know when bids are published</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Don't know, haven't bid on any yet.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Would need additional information regarding Met Council project</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not sure how to bid</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not knowing the steps to take</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not familiar with it or how to use it...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I haven't been informed about projects for bid.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Unknown. Bidding process was not open.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I not sure were I should be looking for Met Council projects, and bidding understanding.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Don't get listings of work I'd be able to do for the Council</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If you are small company like mine which does not have lawyers and accountants it hard to find contract</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I can't find them</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understanding the bidding process and how to find opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>not sure where to find contract opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ability to find jobs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I don't know much about the kinds of goods and services that you buy from small businesses.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>navigating the system, knowing how to put together a winning proposal, building partnerships with subcontractors, the size of the proposal</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding the proper contacts that would fit us.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Don't know how to access the bid info</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lack of information</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Guidances</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I have never seen an bid announcements from the Met Council so I would say learning how to get on the Met Council's list would be my first barrier to overcome.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MN Certified Vet Owned Small Business - How to receive RFP/RFQ correspondence?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The lack of information.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>understanding the needs in order to provide services</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Have not figured out where to bid any contracts or how</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Not knowing how to</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I don't receive requests for projects that I know of.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Understanding the protocols "do's and don'ts" of the bid process.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Don't know how no one has shown me</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Knowing where to start</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I don't know where to access bidding information for Professional and Technical Services area</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Where and how to bid, when/where our services can be best matched with project needs, how best to use NIACS to describe/match our services</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I do not know how to bid. I heard a local church was successful</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>As a professional an technical services provider, our experience is that Met Council tends to engage with businesses such as those that provide engineering, or system-type of specialization. Perhaps it is due to our lack of familiarity about Met Council in general and its needs.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Most of the small minority business barriers</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Need more information on Met Council to determine their needs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Not sure where to bid</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Not knowing how to bid or receive bid packages</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>how to get that information</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I don't know how to get the information</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>GETTING LEAD</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I don't really understand how to bid yet</i>

Council project too big

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I am new to the process and will need time to figure out on how to put together a bid package. Also the scope of work is often to big for what I have the capacity for. I would benefit from smaller contracting opportunities.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>can only handle a portion of the work since a small company</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Too big of projects or too many experience qualifications</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Contracts are large and mostly conducive to the large, multi-discipline firms. Also, many projects come through the Master Services Agreements which, again, are geared towards large, multi-discipline firms.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Job size</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>We do not typically work on infrastructure projects. We primarily work in negotiated contracts rather than on hard-bid "cattle call" projects.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Sometimes seen as "too small"</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Projects are too large for a smaller firm, prime contractors do not not contact qualified MCUB/DBE firms. I am not sure if compliance is being done on these projects</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Resources to handle an entire project versus small pieces. Need larger projects to be broken down</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Met Council - as a small company, they recommend we go under a large company to bid. They don't recommend small businesses. The bar is very high and difficult to get job directly as a small business.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Size and scope</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Size of the projects, payroll for projects</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Usually they are too large for our small company to bid directly, we usually bid as a subcontractor.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>We are a sub contractor</i>

Communication Issue with the Council

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Never heard back one way or another. Award was suppose to be made in April or May. Heard nothing at all. Really poor communications relies sole on the system with very little H2H contact. Again seems</i>
--

like one big bureaucracy which has gate keepers who know very little about the services they are procuring. I am sure it was designed for the large MET projects i.e. engineering construction etc. not necessarily professional services not related to engineering, constructions etc.

- *Being invited to bid*
- *You need to send out bid request notifications*
- *too many web pages and links on the original site*
- *We have attempted to meet with Met Council staff to let staff know about us and to find out more about when contracts for our business will come out and so far no one has agreed to meet with us. We had heard years back about an upcoming opportunity, but never saw it come out. Our only work for Met Council is as a subcontractor.*
- *We are a WBE but not a MCUB WBE at this time. Have had certification pending since about January*
- *No information received*
- *Not pre-qualified as the company through the selection process in 2014. Have not been invited to submit a proposal since. As a company, we have worked on numerous previous Met Council jobs, from Central Corridor (as the lead drainage engineer), to SW LRT, and "C", "D", and Orange line BRTs. Also is active with MnDOT large projects as a prime or as a sub. Trying to be part of Metro Transit's consulting pool.*

Getting paid

- *I don't see any barriers, I think the biggest issues is changes on the job and getting paid.*
- *Getting Paid in a timely manner. Council not signing Change Orders.*
- *Payments*

Competing with large firms

- *ability to compete in fee with much larger/ more corporate firms*
- *The threshold for entry into public bidding is too high. Larger businesses can absorb the cost of completing detailed portfolios, marketing material, proposals, etc without compromising their ability to land and deliver on contracts. Solo, especially, can be huge assets, but don't have the ability to gamble on many proposals because they are very time consuming and at the end of the day still don't compete with larger firms. The large firms continue to be favored in the entire process and culture. Individuals, like me, with extensive experience and value to add may not have a portfolio and referrals because we've been in a public sector position most of our career and transitioned to independent. Insurance is a barrier too. Mostly, the system is not friendly at all to sm business.*
- *Competing with larger firms that have better name recognition. Possible requirements for using certain computer drafting programs.*
- *Competing with larger and more established business and breaking existing supplier relationships*
- *Competing against large businesses*
- *Not all Primes send bid solicitations for every Met Council project; Difficult to compete against larger competitors who have price advantages*
- *We are a very small 'niche' business*
- *Being a smaller company so we get outbid by larger companies sometimes*
- *My target client is contracting to Met Council directly. My scope is not separated out of the larger prime contract during bidding. My scope is typically self-performed by large prime contractors.*
- *LARGER IT COMPANIES HAVE BEEN OUTBID PROHEADSETS ALWAYS*
- *We are a small design firm*
- *Our size*

SMALL BUSINESSES SURVEY REPORT

8/10/2021

Financial

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical know how, financial constrains and time.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Financial Fund available</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have not had money to boost business and professionalism, they did not give me any help with loan or anything</i>

Access to capital

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Capital for business operations.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Capital, and being unknown in the industry</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Access Capital expand my business.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No bidder to bid; no working capital</i>

Lack of resource

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Time to complete the application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Since there are multiple portals to finding projects, it's hard to keep up with all the portals when you are a small business and wear many hats. We don't have a lot of time to search EVERY portal and the opportunities listed are rarely projects that fit our expertise.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>10 years ago, I learned to use the state portal, it was quite simple, and then they changed it and it's impenetrable</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No barriers, we can't find labor to grow</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Currently, the number of required staff personnel.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Currently would be manpower/equipment depending on scale of project</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is challenging for small firms to assemble robust RFP packages with limited resources (i.e. staffing, no dedicated marketing staff).</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I don't have the required equipment.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We lack the time to prepare proposals for competitive bids.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Weak Labor Force</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Time</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It's a matter of resources. Unable to expend resources on bidding or train someone else to do it for me.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I'm a one person company and trying to fit in to be able to grow is difficult.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If you are small company like mine which does not have lawyers and accountants it hard to find contract</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Needing full time staff, too hard to place part time on projects</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I believe there was an RFP once - that was quite extensive. For a small business with a small number of employees, it can be challenging to find the time to fill out an extensive RFP.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Timing, magnitude, capacity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>New Technology in Clean Energy & Storage Professionals cant quite believe we have it already developed.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Time - Generally government bidding is complicated and time consuming, requiring too much time for our little company. Money - usually the winning bid is unbelievably inexpensive - like how are we supposed to keep our doors open and people employed at those prices?.</i>

Winning contracts

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It's hard to know when we have not been awarded any projects.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We have a good relationship with Metro Transit, however find it difficult to get awarded work outside of our niche/with the greater organization.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Winning at least one contract with Met Council, we don't have visibility for IT related contracting opportunities/RFP's</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have never had the opportunity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not low bid</i>

- *Just had to be low bid*

Fewer PT contracts

- *There are much fewer professional services opportunities than construction or goods sold.*

Fairness in Procurement

• <i>Bid Shopping, Stringent specifications, Predator pricing, contractor discrimination.</i>
• <i>Bias against small firms in assessing responsibility that sinks bid or requires the Council to cancel the RFP to reissue and recruit larger firms.</i>
• <i>With a very tight contractor market, there is not much time to get through the hiring process as candidates don't last long out in the market. It would be beneficial to the Met Council to accelerate this process</i>
• <i>I put my number on my bid form instead of theirs. I was the lowest number and still wasn't awarded the project.</i>
• <i>I tend to shy away from responding to RFPs simply because in my experience the organization soliciting the bids already has their mind made up and is going to award the contract to the larger companies</i>
• <i>The short period of response time used in the ask needs to be expanded. Letting us know in advance, weeks or months before that an RFP will be issued allows us time to prepare.</i>
• <i>With a very tight contractor market, there is not much time to get through the hiring process as candidates don't last long out in the market. It would be beneficial to the Met Council to accelerate this process</i>
• <i>Only certified as a TGBE and they seem to always want a DBE</i>
• <i>Systemic and structural racism baked into the how the Met Council does its business.</i>
• <i>The projects don't go to small organizations like mine.</i>

Applicable scope of work

• <i>Nothing in my wheelhouse as a professional development training or housing educator</i>
• <i>Applicable Scopes of work</i>
• <i>Bids not a good fit for my business</i>
• <i>Never came across a contract relevant to our industry- Home Health Care</i>
• <i>types of bids offered weren't conducive to the types of services we provide</i>
• <i>We are a supplier, not a subcontractor</i>
• <i>No landscape architecture projects available. Most are for engineering, services or suppliers.</i>
• <i>Relevance to our skills and experience.</i>
• <i>Finding scopes of work that matches my naics code.</i>
• <i>Having the information that my business is even eligible to bid for contractors.</i>
• <i>We sell marketing products ... printing communication pieces and promotional / apparel products. Do I am not sure if we are considered Prime</i>
• <i>I am a supplier and the GC's tell me they want a subcontractor because my part a manufacturer is not enough dollars.</i>
• <i>A lot of them have nothing to do with my industry even though I have set up alerts to receive my industry, and I keep getting emails to big on construction projects when I am not a contractor.</i>
• <i>Most of the opportunities are not relevant to us. We need a way to sort out / opt out of the project and infrastructure implementation opportunities and find ways to promote and/or find opportunities in design research, social impact, strategy, human-centered design and other pre-project formative work.</i>
• <i>no opportunities for my business</i>
• <i>I have not seen any contract that offers translation and interpretation services or diversity training programs.</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Nothing has applied to my business to bid on.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Relevance to our industry, ease to find the jobs, and largely SDVOSB is not a target group on very many jobs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>My business focuses on Behavioral Health and is not a match for your contracts</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>We are a supplier not a contractor. The solicitations that I receive are for labor, not materials.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>unlikely to see request for bid on for books or publishing services</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Most of the projects we don't provide those services for (construction, maintenance, purchasing, etc.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Having to bid to electricals, who often times have their own low voltage division within their company</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Drawings/ Plans are mostly outdated and it makes it difficult to come up with accurate bids.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Few opportunities for our industry</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>WE DON'T DO CONTRACTING PER SE. WE ARE A SUPPLIER OF PRODUCTS, MOSTLY CONSUMABLE ITEMS.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Simply dont know and alot of them are not for food I would like to have that opportunity but dont very small business</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RFP not offered in area of Human Services</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>No work for my business</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>type of work is not related to my field - communications</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>only when Met Council does not have public relations projects.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Have not seen any interior design services projects available.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>No projects that fit our skills</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Not enough solicitations for our field</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>We mainly are needed on an as needed basis for audio and video transcription services.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>WE ARE A PRODUCT SUPPLIER, NOT A CONTRACTOR</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>We are limited to manufacturing cable and harness assemblies and circuit card assemblies</i>

Capacity building trainings

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Business Development</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Estimating</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Funding, tenure/experience, training on bidding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Lack of bid history to gauge pricing. Lack of connecting with project managers and understanding of which contractors has met their MBE, DBE goals and understanding that we can help the meet their goals. Another barrier is how the bid items are bundled together.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Insurance requirements, knowing how to structure a successful bid, internal resources</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Low bid vs service and expertise.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Bidding is not an issue, the issue is the opportunity costs associated with bidding. Weighing the pros and cons of bidding on low bid work.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I don't know how to access bids.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>volume, capacity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Training Difficulties</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Understand how who/how to share our company information</i>

Service not needed

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>You don't need my services as much as other types of services (not a barrier, just a reality)</i>
--

- You don't hire Employee Benefit Firms or Insurance Agents
- Not sure tree services are needed

None/ no barriers

• None / not applicable	21 responses
• None, do not have bandwidth or need to pursue at this time	
• None that I'm aware of. I just haven't considered looking into it, but now I will!	
• None at the moment	
• Have not bid any.	
• None, prime just used a different company	
• Unknown	
• I do not feel like I face any barriers once I get the RFP	
• Unknown	
• Not really sure... haven't bid directly.	
• I'm not sure; I have never bid on a Met Council project.	
• I really haven't tried so I don't know of any barriers. Any work I've done on Met Council projects has been through general contractors doing work for the Met Council.	
• Not sure off hand. In general public sector project can be fairly inflexible which can limit the best most creative work	
• nothing too special or specific to Met Council vs. MnDOT	
• Nothing really, follow the RFP and it is pretty easy, in the terms that you need to be able to answer the requirements fully and clearly.	
• No barriers, we can't find labor to grow	
• Not sure to look	
• haven't use it before	
• Not very much assistance	

Networking with primes, subs or the Council

• Time / resources to network with met council folks.
• Need to partner with the Right Prime or SubContractor
• pre-determination possibly of who the PM wants, lack of relationships with PMs or they are used to a firm and their team. r
• Not connected to the part of met council that would have proposals for a small company
• We sell on your targeted vendor list for the category of lighting. As far as projects go, it's difficult to get to the Prime - would be great if Primes could have a list of targeted companies by industry.
• No idea how to contact the right decision makers.
• Need to connect with primes - is their a current list available?
• Finding prime consultants teams to join; knowing about RFPs before their posted to better position our company on teams; time needed to pull a full proposal together especially if the turnaround time from posting to due date is less than a month
• I don't have a relationship with the Met Council

Union

- I am not unionized
- Pla / union

- *Non union contractors*

Location

- *Projects have been too far away for my company.*
- *I am located in Northern MN and am not interested in projects located in the Cities/Metro*
- *We usually bid north-central area*
- *No contracts in my area of Moorhead MN*

Council requirements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Specs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There are a lot of extra forms and steps required when performing on a Met Council project. Such as, your pay applications are different than industry standard AIA G702 or G703, or the lengthy delay in processing change orders</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sometimes terminology differs. Oftentimes materials spec'd are specialty materials that aren't typically stocked and other materials might do the trick. Otherwise, sometimes it's the sheer volume and timing required to get them completed.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I was told I need to be in business longer in order to certify as a Woman owned business, I was able to certify in the CERT program right away.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It appears somewhat cumbersome</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understanding the requirements</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pre-Bid Meetings/Changing Scope of Work</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The bid requirements and large competition.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sometimes certain certificates, or getting the bid and its due within 2-5 days. I feel we need more time as it has so many forms and details to project.</i>

Prime contractors' willingness of sharing projects

- *The LRT - the waterproofing company seems to get everything without offering a chance to us (recent injection needs).*
- *lack of commitment and open to our proposal*
- *Prime contractors are greedy, selfish and generally don't care about working with small MBE DBE VBE Vendors if they can figure out a way not to.*
- *Most of our work needs to go through an Electrical Contractor, so we don't control the bid price.*

Bonding

- *Only if bonding requirements get to high*
- *I am unable to bid prime because of the bid bonds that are required.*

No experience

- *No experience*

Less projects that have DBE requirements

- *Not enough projects have DBE requirements. Prime companies usually invite DBE firms to meet required DBE %s in the RFP.*

Prevailing wages

- *Prevailing wage, Scheduling equipment according to Prime's schedule.*

Others

- *Mental*

- *Direct sourcing from Manufacturers so we can present competitive bids*
- *?*

Appendix B

List any technical assistance or training you would like to see the Council offer that could support the success of your business.

Access to capital:

- *None. However, True DBE firms need access to capital.*

Available projects

- *What is available?*
- *Where are jobs listed?*

Bidding assistance/training

- *Bid reviews for missed bid opportunities. Explanation and a review of missed bids...understanding why a bid didn't win.*
- *Bidding*
- *Bidding assistance*
- *Bidding for non-construction businesses*
- *bidding workshop, and accounting classes.*
- *General bidding overview*
- *How to see parts in the quote package in rapid order.*
- *In person training on bidding*
- *Just an easy link for bidding purposes*
- *Promote that business can bid on Met Council projects*
- *Train how to see the buyers for specific commodities.*
- *Training on how to bid*
- *Training on how to see what's needed; tips on getting successful in bidding*
- *Training on understanding the process--what goes into a successful bid and then what to expect if your bid is awarded*
- *Training that tells the process for us to bid and requirements businesses must have to bid.*
- *Understanding the process, bid process etc*
- *Webinar training on the step by step process of submitting a bid.*
- *Just instructions or to be setup in the bid portal*
- *Target non-participating businesses and help them enter/use the project portals. Currently the portals are highly technical, which is better for large businesses that can dedicate an employee to it*

Bilingual services

- *Spanish speakers*

Blueprint reading

- *Blueprint reading classes*

Business Development Training

- *A little training will help on how to participate the program would have helped. Thanks*

- *Administration*
- *Business Development*
- *How to align ourselves to bigger projects*
- *I would like some one on one training*
- *More technical assistance*
- *One on one help*
- *quick books*
- *Saturday training sessions*
- *Technical support and making easy to apply and understand contract.*
- *We are DBE certified by MNUCP, we like training which will help to provide our services to Met Council projects. HighCloud Solutions is specialized in Salesforce, Information Technology (IT) services, and IT staff augmentation services. HighCloud Solutions is Salesforce consulting partner. We help our customers to successfully implement Salesforce and information technology projects with agility and attention to detail while maintaining innovation and excellent customer support. We are MBE certified by NMSDC, SBA 8a and HUBZone certified company and GSA schedule holder (Contract Number: 47QTCA20D00CV). We are specialized in software developers and niche skill staffing services.*
- *Web page usage*

Computer programs

- *Computer programs or app training, one on one*

Contract terms

- *Contract terms that are fair to my small business.*

Cut regulations and insurance requirements

- *Just cut the regulations and the insurance requirements*

E-Builder training

- *E-Builder*

Educational/Estimating training

- *INDIGENOUS Education, knowledge, understanding tribal systems/communities and how important early childhood is and is connected to the future of successful economic development*
- *Assistance would be for the targeted program to continue and for primes to be strongly encouraged to reach out to targeted industries.*
- *Estimating help.*
- *Estimating training that gives more numbers to help assist with the bidding.*
- *Learn how to estimate*

Financial

- *attracting capital to my business - investment in my company*
- *Financial training on how to run a company.*

Grants

- *Grants and funding to pursue technical trainings, certification, equipment and licensure*
- *Opportunity to secure funds for business expansion*
- *Information to grants.*

Have health care contracts

- *Health Care relevant contracts educations or resources to help owners bid for said contracts. You can not create contracts worth 25k that will take 10k plus endless hours to complete. What does one walk away with at the end of the day. So pointless and embarrassing!!*
- *Help with connection with contracts in Home Health Care*

Have small projects

- *Have SMALL projects that are for our NACI and only reach out to us about those. Or have big projects and pay the primes some overhead to help the small business. But I get about 5 emails a day from large primes with "here is a link to drawing that you need to pay to access" followed by a phone call that interrupts my work day asking "are you going to bid on the link I sent you". The few times I have paid to download the documents and then spent hours reading the RFP it turned out there was no work that was viable for us and they were clearly just emailing everybody on a list of certified disadvantaged businesses.*
- *I don't think we need technical assistance or training...we just need access and information about what is planned. Especially the work that may not go out for bid. Smaller projects directly with the Council are a great way for companies to get to know the Council.*
- *I would like to see more projects that are set aside for WOSB, DBE, and other small businesses.*
- *Maybe consider a program similar to MnDOT's Quick Call which allows DBEs to provide supplement staff or perform services on a small portion of a project to learn processes and procedures.*

Hear from small businesses

- *Met council needs to hear from small business owners so they are walked through how to overcome the barriers. Funding and set a side contracts.*

How to find opportunities - 43 responses

- *A short how-to introduction video would be nice*
- *a step through of the process*
- *ANY TRAINING LEAD TO GET LEADS*
- *Basic to technical know how on how to bid and grow in business.*
- *Clear awareness of opportunity, clear procedure through portals*
- *Clear understanding of document processing. i.e. Insurance, bonding, workman's comp, other related documents required to meet qualification.*
- *Consolidate portals with other agencies. Offer 1:1 and "live" fixes of our profiles to help us find better opportunities. Have Town Hall meetings to announce new initiatives and optimal types of partnerships for the initiatives. Help us learn how to position ourselves for better selection opportunities. Introduce us individually to key decision-makers inside the MC who might be able to think strategically with us so as to position ourselves for better success.*
- *Contract Opportunities With Metro Council*
- *general and specific written instructions and videos that explain and walk companies thru the processes.*
- *Help me understand the kinds of contracts/work available as a sub-contractor with the Met Council. Also if there are certain types of vendors that you focus on working with (women-owned businesses, etc).*
- *How to bid, navigating site for contracts*
- *How to find opportunities*
- *How to find opportunities that fit your business offerings*
- *How to find the RFPs and what requirements are needed to participate.*
- *How to get on the 'radar' of general contractors to become a sub for their bids*
- *How to get our company name in the Vendor for IT Staff Augmentation services*

- *how to get work with metcouncil, how does the council feel about DBE goals as it relates to projects? what projects are upcoming from the council*
- *How to know about upcoming projects/RFPs before they are posted*
- *How to look for and find opportunities; how to look for and find prime contractors; how to prepare a successful proposal; how to determine future projects so we can position the firm to compete successfully.*
- *How to navigate contracts and what to expect once a contract is awarded*
- *How to navigate the bureaucracy and procurement process*
- *How to navigate through your website*
- *How to respond to contract opportunities*
- *How to search and fill out bids/contracts*
- *HOW TO USE THE MET COUNCIL'S CONTRACT SITE*
- *How would I find out about bid opportunities for the services we offer?*
- *I would like a better understanding of how to submit proposals that will get the attention of Met Council staff.*
- *I would like to know how to bid for your Promotional Product items.*
- *Instructions/website link*
- *Introduction platform that allows needs of the Met Council to connect with the appropriate Vendors. Help identify what we do!*
- *introduction to buyers*
- *links to bids/solicitations*
- *Maybe some support on finding opportunities within my industry.*
- *Need more information*
- *Need to know or receive more information about your process*
- *Perhaps training on how to negotiate the bidding labyrinth for contracting with the Met Council.*
- *See above - basic info about whether our services are ever relevant.*
- *Shared info on how the process works for prime/sub work*
- *Some training on where to find projects that include your scope of work.*
- *Someone to help me navigate*
- *The basics would help, anything*
- *The training on how small business can successfully solicit for business*
- *This issue is how the government awards contracts.*

How to win projects

- *EXPLANATION OF WHAT WE CAN DO TO GET AWARDED SOME BIDS , INSTEAD OF INVESTING VAST EFFORT THAT DOES NOT BENEFIT OUR BUSINESS.*
- *filtering of projects, ways to improve chances of awarding*

Location

- *A good location to*

Marketing training

- *marketing*
- *Marketing*
- *Marketing, Communications, Branding, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion efforts (recruiting, retention, rebrand, inclusion consultation) and areas in these capacities*
- *Online marketing,web page design*

Match making session

- *There has been past outreach training that was good, I would continue that. I would also like to see the Met Council staff meet with prospective small businesses -- maybe a match making session.*

Meet & greet

- *I would like to have a meet & greet with the Councils project managers so they know what type of services I provide and could keep me in mind for future opportunities.*
- *Maybe meet n' greet with Met Council Project Managers? Something to introduce ourselves and talk about our services offered?*
- *Meet with us. Learn about us, help us figure out where we should connect to you*
- *More introductions to actual decision makers and opportunity to develop relationships.*
- *More one on one time to get to know that right people, how to use more direct select type opportunities*
- *Not a training, but creating a communication place for project managers to see what small businesses do.*

Met Council Paperwork

- *introduction to the paper work required.*

Met council contact info

- *How is Met Council structured and who are the contacts (knowing whom to call for what. Maybe simple bid process refresher for Council. Understanding delivery locations, etc. (can be touch for Met Transit work). All of this can be learned by asking questions and staff has always been so helpful.*
- *I need a contact at the council that can help me with the process*

Met council specifications

- *specs and substitutions*

Networking

- *It would be helpful if I could speak with a Council person who understands procurement of services.*
- *More relationship building with small businesses and community members.*
- *NETWORK GROUPS*
- *networking with managers to gain insight as to how to best respond to their needs*

None

- *46 respondents mentioned they do not need any assistance*

Not sure

- *16 respondents mentioned they are not sure*

Notification on opportunities

- *Email Notification of Bidding Opportunities*
- *just links and reminders or connections to opportunities*
- *Notice of when opportunities are available*
- *Please provide link and/or login information to procurement location.*
- *Projects available / training.*

Other

- *Transparency and feedback would go a long way; the issues are not technical for us*
- *?*

- *Achieving target numbers specific per trade with inflation to predict*
- *As a staffing firm / DBE, we would like to provide temporary and perm placement for both Met Council and prime contractors.*
- *Better categories I make interlocking concrete paving stone and I am in concrete so I get road building information etc....*
- *Education on how to apply*
- *Emphasis on ground based LiDAR surveys*
- *how to share capabilities with appropriate MetCouncil areas/staff that are not IT, construction, transportation (directly) related*
- *I have taken most of the training but never anything on food*
- *I would like the council to have a website where small company like mine can check bid results as soon as it's posted and also have access to empirical data from previous bid results. Not just the total bid price but the detailed line items price from any general contractor bids.*
- *I would like the Met to allow small business like mine in during the design phase.*
- *I'd love to see Met Council staff come to agreement on and implement practices around things like higher preference points for DBEs, transparency around budgets, disaggregating opportunities into multiple contracts, and other positive measures.*
- *Innovation and Leveraging Human Center Design Thinking in Design work*
- *List of IT decision makers*
- *Sts certified transportation provider*
- *Sub-contractor tips+*
- *Train office staff and outreach to be able to find abs review projects within our industry (earth retention).*
- *Trained Professionals in the Energy Field talking to Us without a Personal Profit Motive to work for me or Company then offer help.*
- *Training in person and giving me chance to understand it all!*
- *Trainings are great, but they do not alter the pro-Ig firm system itself which is a bigger barrier than anything.*
- *Transparent and wiliness to provide opportunities for those who show commitment in delivering professional services to the community*
- *Understanding unions and legal ramifications*
- *What is VPAT and how it would apply to the type of services I could provide to the Met Council*
- *Yes*
- *Securing labor force*
- *small business liaison*

Previous bid results

- *Out of the box thinking: if you could supply "winning" bid numbers for projects that have been done previously, and maybe budgets on projects that are new, I could do a quick comparison to see if I can be competitive -- might make more apt to open your emails. Sorry, I don't mean to be harsh.*

Provide more projects

- *provide more work*

Provide templates for contractors to complete.

- *Provide templates for contractors to complete. Make the interviews accessible. In person or online.*

RFP process

- *Hold a virtual information session to explain RFP/RFQ distribution process. Is there an email list?*

- *I could use some support in the form of writing proposals and actually being awarded bids.*
- *Setup was confusing at first. Maybe a video on "how to get set up and download the first rfp"*
- *Successful proposal submission*
- *Writing successful proposals for Information Technology (IT) Projects,*

Speed up the council process

- *Speed up the processes for Payment, Shop Drawing Review time and Reviewing Change Orders. It take way to long of a process.*
- *The Council must educate and train their CAR & ACAR on basic construction (knowledge, practices, communication, and so forth). Furthermore, the Council must address the huge delay in response times with respect to RFIs, COs, ASIs, etc. These delays have an enormous impact on small businesses, which ultimately harm our business operations*

Train prime and council staff

- *Train the prime contractors on the importance and methods of utilizing small diverse businesses. Train compliance team to push the issue with big primes. And subs like Otis, TK elevators, Schindler in the case of elevators.*
- *The training is for program staff acting as the evaluation panel. Consider requiring diversity in your evaluation panels for RFP or expanding unconscious bias training. Reduction in micro business bias would improve the success of my business and others like me.*

PRIME CONTRACTORS/PROPOSERS SURVEY REPORT

8/10/2021



Office of Equal Opportunity

Promoting Successful Participation on Projects with DBE/MCUB Utilization Goals

Conducted for Small Businesses Programs

By Small Business Engagement and Development unit

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SECTION 1: SURVEY OVERVIEW

This report summarizes data collected from Prime Contractors survey. The purpose of the survey was to collect relevant information that will help the Metropolitan Council make targeted improvements to the Small Business Programs, outreach and support services. Therefore, the overall goal of the survey is to better understand the successes and challenges that prime bidders/proposers experience on contracts with small business utilization goals. As a government agency, the Metropolitan Council is committed to utilizing businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals in its procurement and contracting activities. To backing that commitment, the Council facilitates the following two small business programs.

- The Disadvantaged Business Program (DBE) for contracts and procurements made with federal money.
- The Metropolitan Council Under-utilized Business Program (MCUB) for contracts and procurements made with local money.

SECTION 2: HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

The survey was administered by the Office of Equal Opportunities from July 7, 2021, until July 27, 2021. An invitation to participate in the survey was sent by e-mail from the Small Businesses Engagement and Development unit to 69 prime contractors/proposers that include construction contractors and professional technical consultants.

After sending an initial email invite to a survey on July 7 until the survey closing date July 27, a total of 28 (40.6%) survey responses were received. During the survey open time, two follow-up emails were sent out to contacts that were not able to complete the survey yet.

SECTION 3: SURVEY DESIGN

The survey contained 9 questions: 1 demographic question to capture respondent's business name, 7 multiple choice questions and 1 open-ended question. On the demographic question, we asked respondents' business name to ensure the council contact them for any assistance they requested in the survey. The survey was formatted and delivered as an electronic survey to be completed online with Microsoft Forms. To protect the confidentiality of small businesses and their responses, all submissions were anonymous.

The survey was designed to measure prime contractors/proposers' insights in four areas: (1) bid experience on the Met Council projects; (2) barriers they face in acquiring DBE/MCUB subcontractor participation on their projects? (3) scopes of work they would like to see more small businesses do; and (4) their interest in the Mentor Protégé program.

List of survey questions includes:

- Question # 1: Biasness Name
- Question # 2: Have you ever bid or performed as a prime contractor for a Met Council project?
- Question # 3: Do you have difficulty in acquiring DBE/MCUB subcontractor participation on your projects?

- Question # 4: If yes to the above question, please select all that are applicable
- Question # 5: Are there scopes of work in which you would like to see more DBE/MCUBs?
- Question # 6: Have you participated in the Mentor Protégé Program?
- Question # 7: If yes, would you be willing to mentor again?
- Question # 8: If you answered no to the above question, would you be interested in becoming a mentor?
- Question # 9: If you answered no, please select from the following.

RESULTS

This section provides a general snapshot of the prime contractors/proposers' survey. Following is a breakdown of questionnaires and responses.

1. Bidding experience on met council projects



Key Findings

Data clearly indicates that 96% of all respondents have bid as a prime contractor for a met council project.

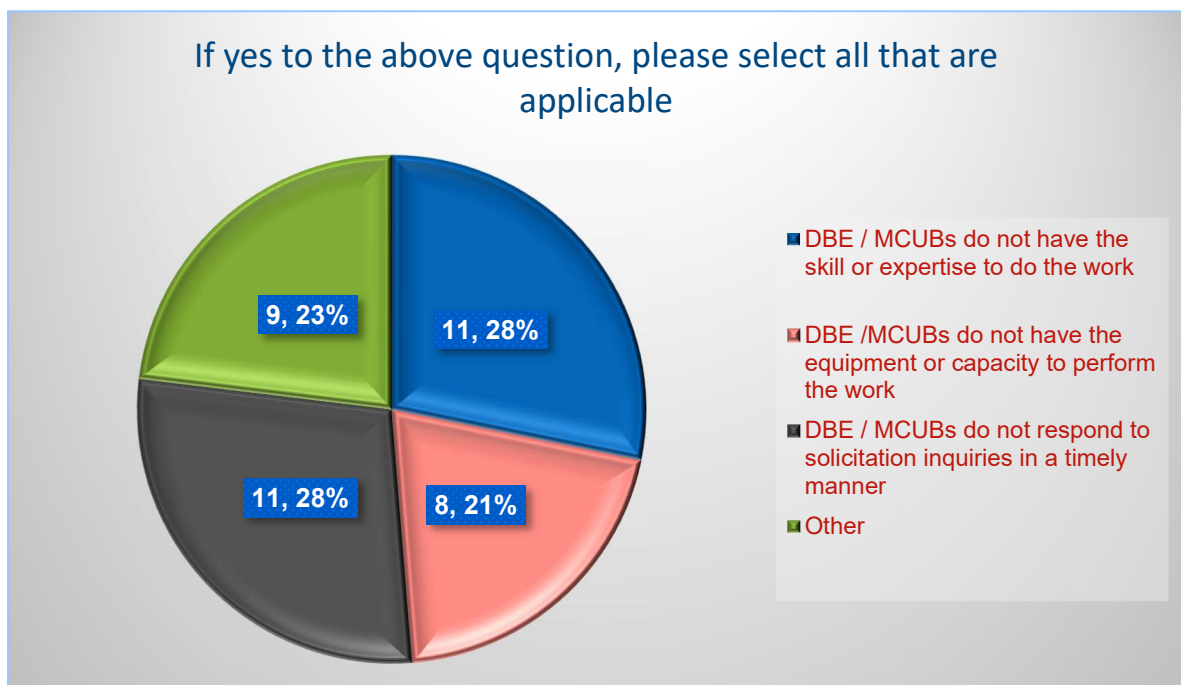
2. Bidding experience

Do you have difficulty in acquiring DBE/MCUB subcontractor participation on your projects?



Responses confirmed that prime contractors/proposers equally divided when it comes to express their difficulty in acquiring DBE/MCUB subcontractor participation on their projects. Of 28 respondents, half (50%) stated that they are experiencing difficulties in acquiring DBE/MCUB subcontractor participation on their projects versus the rest 50 % stated no difficulties.

3. Types of difficulties prime contractors/proposers face



Key findings: In this survey question number 4, we asked those 14 businesses that responded “Yes” to questionnaire number 3 to find out their difficulties by selecting all that were applicable to their business. Of those four choices, *DBE / MCUBs do not have the skill or expertise to do the work*; and

DBE/MCUBs do not have the equipment or capacity to perform the work were selected at higher level than other choices.

Participants who used the “Other” option for this question wrote the following

- *It requires a significant amount of effort and is difficult for small generals such as ourselves to afford the resources it takes to seek out participation.*
 - *Often, I find myself emailing the DBEs multiple times and calling them for quotes and they send in their quote at the last minutes.*
 - *Its hard enough to get DBEs to quote us and now add all the paperwork the DBE companies need to fill out prior to bid time, on the last MCES job I bid a few DBE companies never did send me the LOI form, I could not use them*
 - *DBE / MCUB information not accurate or current*
 - *We send out an invite to bid, we will send it to as many as 125 vendors, we receive quotes from approximately 3% of the vendors.*
 - *Sometimes there just isn't enough of their work to fill the goal without just running material through a supplier*
 - *Our work is mainly with Environmental Services on their wastewater facilities and lift stations. Many subcontractors have no experience in this highly specialized area of work and additionally they do not want to work around wastewater.*
 - *It is tough to identify, contact, then receive a response in the time allowed. nd contact and respond in timely manner.*
4. *Scopes of work that prime contractors need from DBEs/MCUBs*

5. DBE/MCUB’s scopes of work that prime contractors look for subcontracting out

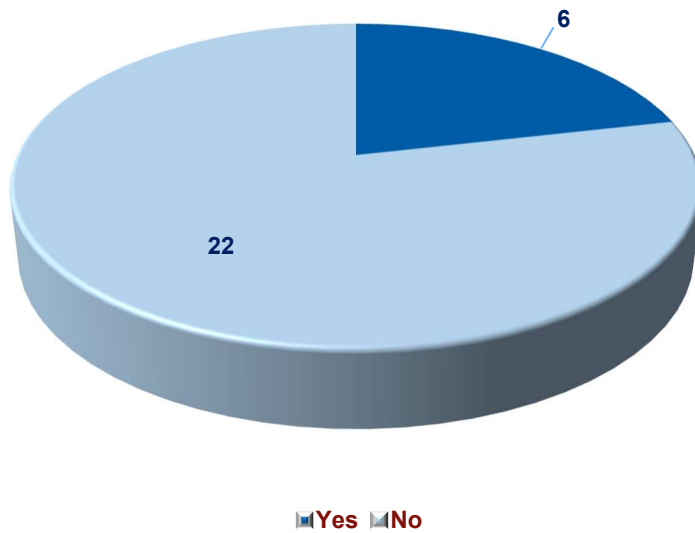
In this open-ended question, prime contractors/proposers were asked to identify the type of work that they would like to sub out to DBE/MCUB firms. Of 28 responses, following are list of work scopes that most identified in this survey:

- No need: five responses
- All scopes: four responses
- Electrical work: three responses
- Concrete work: three responses
- Mechanical work: three responses
- Asphalt work: two responses
- Landscape work: two responses
- Design work: two responses

For detail responses, see Appendix – A on page 10 of this report

6. Participation on Mentor Protégé Program

Have you participated in the Mentor Protégé Program?



Findings:

In this “Yes or No” question, participants were asked to describe their participation on the mentor protégé program. The result of the data indicates that the number of prime contractors/proposers who have participated in the program is low which is 21% compare to 79% that have not.

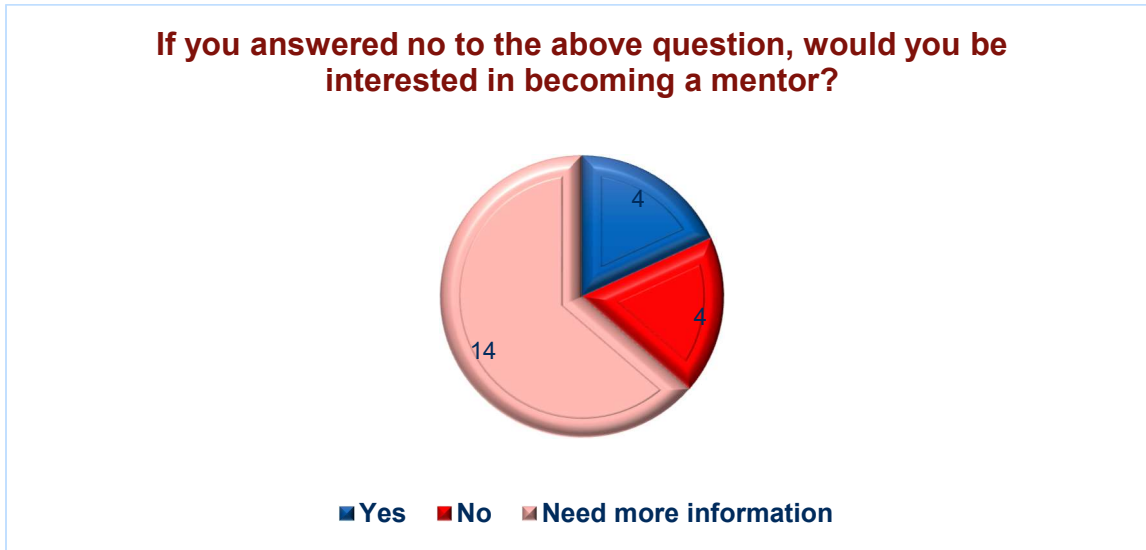
1. Willingness to mentor again

If yes, would you be willing to mentor again?



Findings: in this survey question, we asked those 6 prime contractors/proposers that responded “Yes” to question number 8 to see if they are willing to mentor again. As the data illustrates, all respondents have indicated their willing to do so.

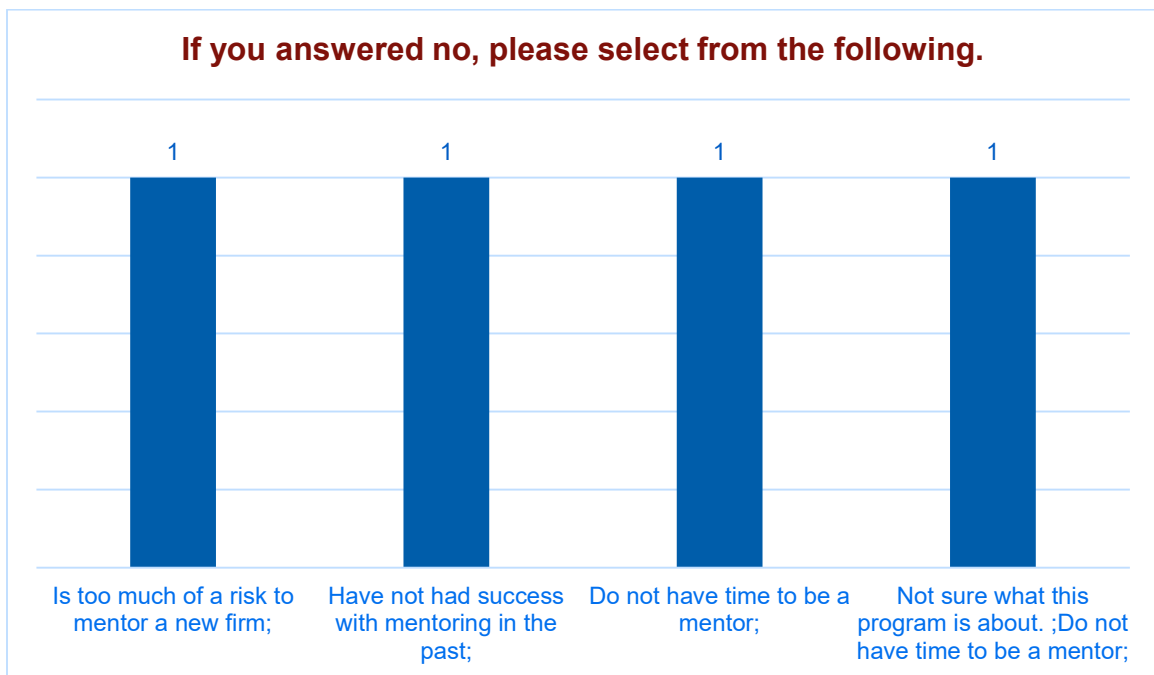
7. Willingness to mentor for first time



Findings: When those 22 respondents that have not participated in the mentor protégé program were asked if they are willing to mentor small businesses; 64% stated that they would like more information about the program, 18% expressed that they are willing to mentor and 18% mentioned they are not.

1. Possible reasons why not interested in mentoring small businesses

Finally, those who answered “No” to question # 8 were asked to provide their reason why they were not interested in the mentor protégé program. See the chart below for their responses:



Respondents' Scope of Work

Type of Work	Number of respondents
Construction Contractors	16
PT Consultants	11
Unknown	1
Total	28

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey indicates that the biggest difficulties that prime contractors/proposers face in acquiring DBE/MCUB firms to work for their projects are:

1. DBE/MCUBs do not have the skill or expertise to do the work; and
2. DBE /MCUBs do not have the equipment or capacity to perform the work.

The survey also reported that majority of prime contractors/proposers are willing to participate in the Mentor Protégé Program that is designed to assist small business growth and development.

Recommendations: Met council should continue promoting the following areas that helps remove some of the barriers prime contractors/proposers face when finding more capable DBE/MCUB firms to work for their projects:

1. Assist DBE/MCUB firms to increase their expertise to perform work effectively
2. Document work that could be provided by MCUBS
3. Assistance to equip small businesses to compete more effectively for council projects
4. **Recruit or increase the number of contract ready firms that can perform the following most identified areas**
 - Electrical work
 - Concrete work
 - Mechanical work
 - Asphalt work
 - Landscape work
 - Design work
5. Facilitate Mentor Protégé Program information session in a timely manner to educate prime contractors/proposers about the program and provide an opportunity for them to get connected with ready and willing small DBE/MCUB firms.

Appendix – A: Are there scopes of work in which you would like to see more DBE/MCUBs?

Concrete work

- *Yes, Concrete work, bituminous, grading, erosion and restoration, coatings, electricians, clearing and grubbing*
- *Concrete, asphalt, utility work*
- *YES< I would like to see more items mandatory, removals, structural concrete, storm sewer work*

All

- *It would be nice to see more in all scopes*
- *Most everything*
- *All*
- *All scopes*

Mechanical work

- *Mechanical, electrical, plumbing fire protection*
- *Performing mechanical contractors that are willing to perform the work and not look for pass throughs*
- *Civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering*

Electrical work

- *Mechanical, electrical, plumbing fire protection*
- *Electrical, Fence, Survey, & Landscape. A combination of increasing DBEs in the current pool of DBEs that perform these scopes or getting the current DBEs to submit quotes and participate. on the bids.*
- *Site work, Painting, HVAC, Electrical*

Asphalt work

- *Concrete, asphalt, utility work*
- *asphalt paving, dewatering*

Storm sewer work

- *YES< I would like to see more items mandatory, removals, structural concrete, storm sewer work*

Painting

- *Site work, Painting, HVAC, Electrical*

Site work

- *Site work, Painting, HVAC, Electrical*

Design work

- *Traffic Signal Design, Landscape Architecture, ITS, Survey, NEPA*
- *Interior Design, Specifications, Cost Estimating*

Landscape work

- *Traffic Signal Design, Landscape Architecture, ITS, Survey, NEPA*
Electrical, Fence, Survey, & Landscape. A combination of increasing DBEs in the current pool of DBEs that perform these scopes or getting the current DBEs to submit quotes and participate. on the bids.

Fence

- *Electrical, Fence, Survey, & Landscape. A combination of increasing DBEs in the current pool of DBEs that perform these scopes or getting the current DBEs to submit quotes and participate. on the bids.*

Survey

- *Electrical, Fence, Survey, & Landscape. A combination of increasing DBEs in the current pool of DBEs that perform these scopes or getting the current DBEs to submit quotes and participate. on the bids.*

bituminous

- *Yes, Concrete work, bituminous, grading, erosion and restoration, coatings, electricians, clearing and grubbing*

Grading

- *Yes, Concrete work, bituminous, grading, erosion and restoration, coatings, electricians, clearing and grubbing*

Erosion and restoration

- *Yes, Concrete work, bituminous, grading, erosion and restoration, coatings, electricians, clearing and grubbing*

Coatings

- *Yes, Concrete work, bituminous, grading, erosion and restoration, coatings, electricians, clearing and grubbing*

Clearing and grubbing

- *Yes, Concrete work, bituminous, grading, erosion and restoration, coatings, electricians, clearing and grubbing*

Dewatering

- *asphalt paving, dewatering*

Architecture work

- *Architecture*

Not sure

- *TBD*

No need

- *No*
- *No*
- *No*
- *Nothing particular*

Engineering work

- *all fields of engineering - structural, MEP, etc*
- *Civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering*

Other

- *No matter what the scope is hold the generals to the goal. I feel the generals shop my numbers after the GC is awarded the job.*
- *The DBE/MCUB lists are MNDOT based. MNDOT associated subcontractors have no idea what they are doing on a MCES project so they don't bid.*
- *We don't usually prime and are typically a sub*