

Small Business Equity Assessment (SBEA)

Report Presentation

Lila Eltawely, Enterprise Equity Sr. Manager

Management Committee December 11, 2024



The Ask of Strong & Starlike (Consultant)

Assess

- The 4Ps
- Access
- Goals & Impact

Identify

- Barriers to participation
- Barriers to achieving goals & objectives

Recommend

- Strategies & Best Practices to alleviate barriers

Assessment Methodology

METHODOLOGY

01

Core Team Creation

02

Discovery Through
Listening

03

Field Scan

04

Infrastructure
Assessment

05

Analysis & Drafting



Summary of Those Engaged

Listening Session Pre-Survey Engagement

Everyone who registered did not attend a session, but we did engage them on some questions. 145 business owners and 60 staff completed this through registration.



Listening Session Participants

- 69: Business Owner Session
- 59: Staff Session



Interview Participants

- 3 Business Owners



Survey Responses

- 143: Business Owner Survey
- 21: Staff Survey

193

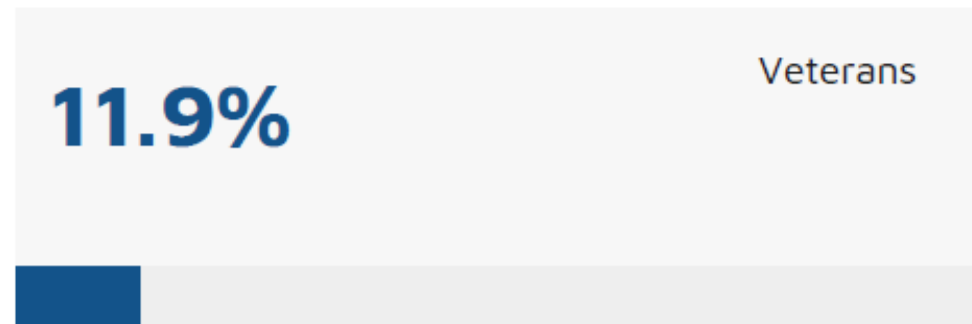
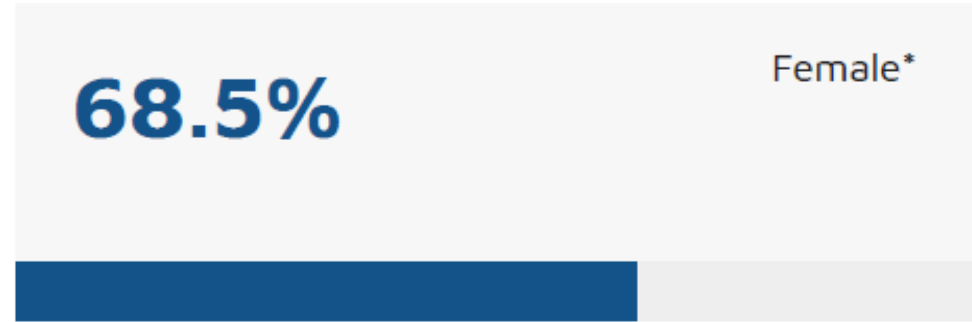
Business owners through the survey and listening sessions*

74

Staff through the survey and listening sessions*

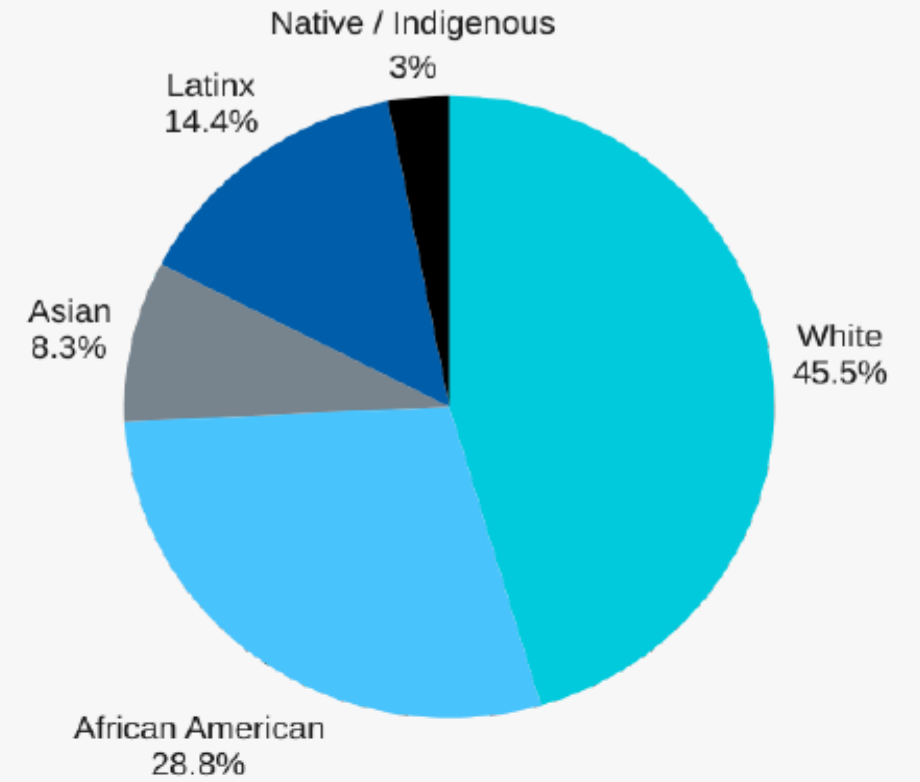
*Those who attended a listening session and took the survey were removed from totals to avoid double counting

SURVEY DATA DISAGGREGATION

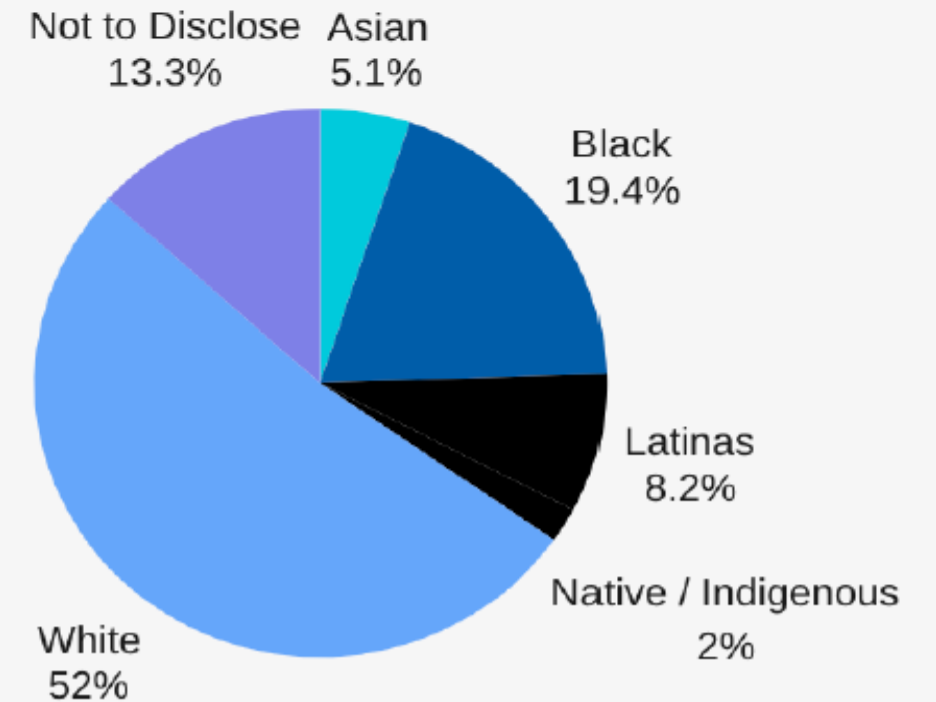


*2.13% Did not disclose gender

RACIAL DISAGGREGATION



FEMALE DISAGGREGATION BY RACE



Themes: In Their Own Words

Business Owner

“Would I be just a number for the Council to use on their data compliance as (they) have completed their outreach, or is there a true effort in changing the status quo?”

Council Staff Member

Make it something we talk about more at the Council. Have leadership periodically draft emails to all Council staff touting the importance. Maybe add a monthly/quarterly Wire article highlighting MCUB/DBE successes.”

THEME 1:

Business Owners Engaged Struggle to Find Contracting Opportunities Specific to the Goods & Services They Provide

50.37%

Have not done business with the Met Council (survey)

48.15%

Identified, "Not Knowing Where to Find Contracting Opportunities" when asked to identify the top barriers that if removed would be impactful (survey)



”

“Bulk [of contracting opportunities on the website] are construction and department of transportation but something to break out non construction services would be amazing.”

-Business Owner



THEME 2:

Average Small Business Contracting Capacity Shared is Higher than the Average Dollar Amount of Contracts Secured

65.72%

Noted a contracting capacity between \$175,001-\$5,000,000

56.83%

Noted an average contract award amount secured between \$10,001-\$175,000



”

“Right now, we need more business. Our existing clients have cut back their budgets tremendously for events, as production costs have skyrocketed since the pandemic. Up nearly double from 2019.”

-Business Owner



THEME 3:

Improvements to the Technological Solutions May Benefit Both Business Owners & Staff

82.9%

Staff indicated that “having an updated or improved searchable database of small businesses help increase your use of MCUBs and/or DBEs”

29.41%

Business owners suggested adding a search bar to filter opportunities may help in finding opportunities.



”

“I would have 1 system created that tracks all steps, documentation, purchasing, small business information (as it changes and needs to be updated) with clear responsibilities and ownership across the council.”

-Staff Member



THEME 4:

Accountability from Staff and Leadership May Help Improve Outcomes

#2

Accountability listed as #2.

#6

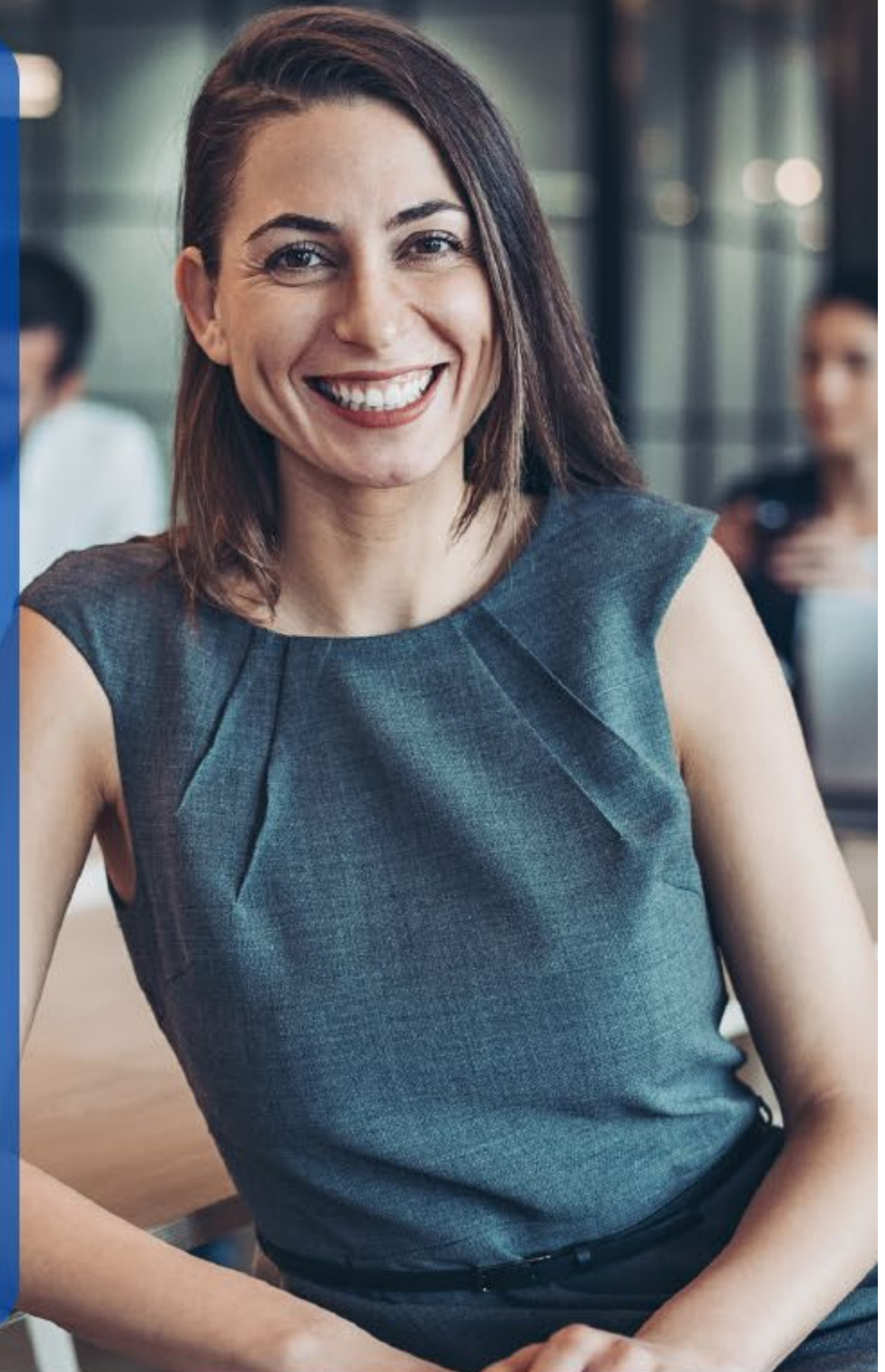
Transparency was listed as number 6



”

“Have leadership held accountable, which will have them hold their staff accountable.”

-Staff Member



*The Met Council Culture Survey was not administered by Strong & Starlike Consulting, Inc. but was reviewed through the assessment along with related data we received through listening sessions and the survey with staff.

THEME 5:

Increased and Updated Training and Resources for Both Staff and Business Owners May Improve Their Use of The Tools Available

45.93% Business owners unfamiliar with Met Council's contracting practices (survey)

82.21% Business owners indicated that having a guidebook on how to do business with the Met Council would be a helpful tool (survey)



”

“[Having a] step by step guide on how to bid, how to price service so we are not way off, how to leverage our DBE certification and where to find primes that want to work with DBEs. Forecast of coming up contracts.”

-Business Owner



THEME 6:

Increased Strategic Opportunities for Staff & Business Owners to Connect May Be Welcomed

47.06%

When there is autonomy*, staff select a vendor based on someone they have worked with before.

64.29%

Business owners wanting contact information for key staff and decision makers in the guidebook



*Local, state, and federal laws have specific guidelines staff adhere to. However, opportunities under certain thresholds exist where direct spending may occur, within specific parameters.



”

“It's still hard to find the person who makes the decision.”

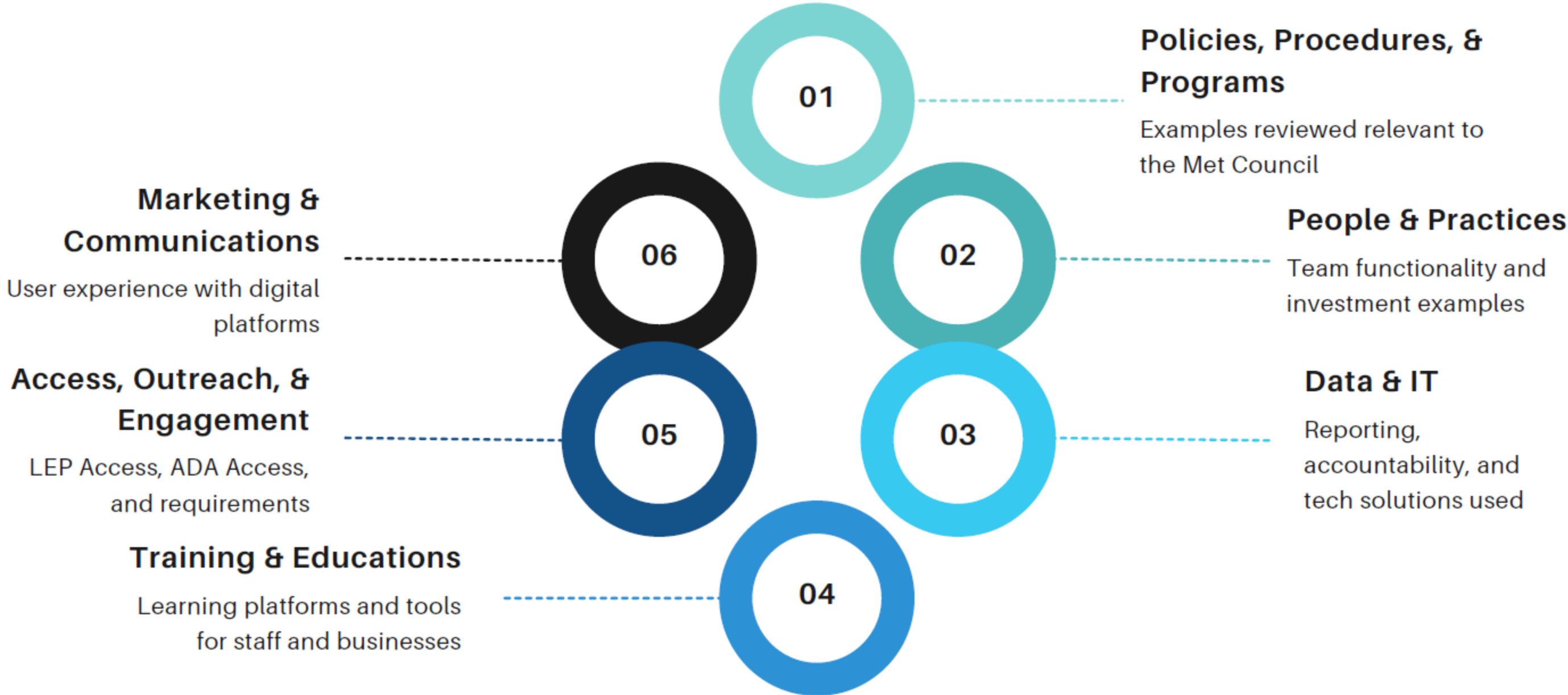
-Business Owner

Field Scan



AREAS RESEARCHED

SBEA Field Scan



Policies, Procedures, and Programs

Overview

- Assessed 9 areas from the field related to this focus area
- Areas assessed informed by SBEA and broader field practices

Examples of Areas Covered

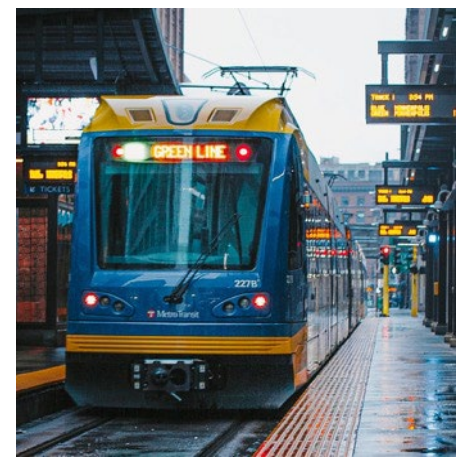
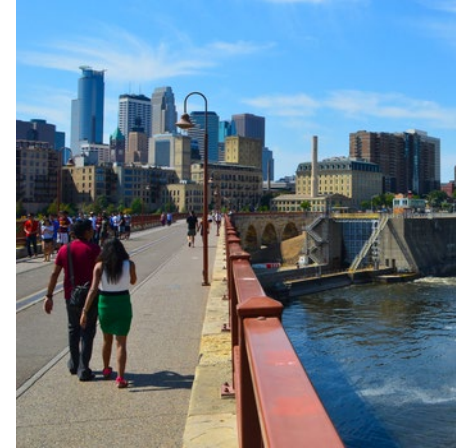
Prompt Payment to certified firms
Late Payment Penalties
Bidding Preferences
Incentives for Primes
Good Faith Efforts for Entity Departments
Business Inclusion Spending Plans

Prompt Payment & Late Penalties

California

- If the requirement is not met, State departments must automatically calculate and pay the appropriate late payment penalties...
- Requirements in State Statute
- Assistance for contractors
- Late Payment Penalty Paid Report Dashboard

<https://www.dgsapps.dgs.ca.gov/pd/lppp/>

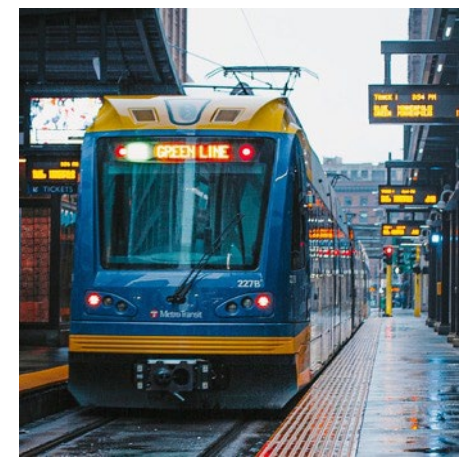
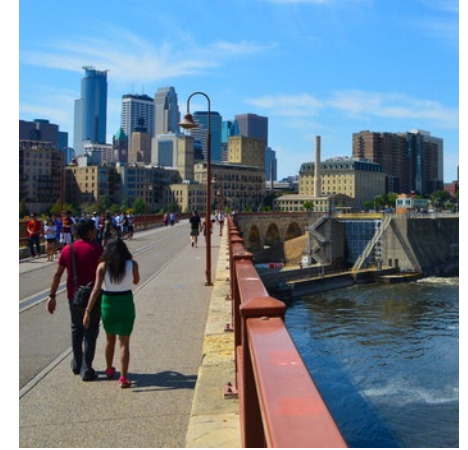


People and Practices

Cross-Departmental Teams (Harvard Case Study)

“In **Tulsa**, few city staff understood the procurement process well, and some vendors felt overwhelmed or confused about how to do business with the city...”

- 16-member cross-departmental body created (The Procurement Excellence Steering Committee, PESC)
- Regularly met to identify pain points
- Committee led specific projects (ex: creating improved process map; improving vendor experience)



Data and Information Services (IS)

Overview

- Assessed reporting requirements
- Assessed vendor portals; finding contract opportunities; and data dashboards

Interactive Dashboard & Site (Hawaii)

- Hawaii Awards & Notices Data System (HANDS) pulls contracting opportunities in one place
- Includes data dashboards
- Breaks out opportunities by categories

Training and Education

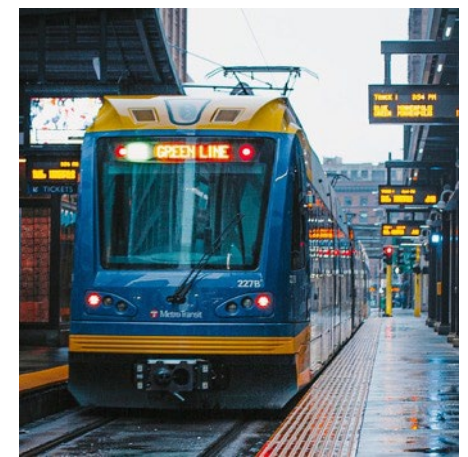
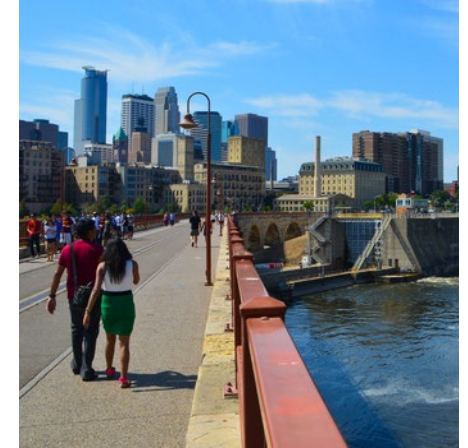
Training & Education for staff & Business Owners

Overview:

- Assessed examples of training and education for Council staff
- Assessed examples of training and education for business owners

Examples of Areas Covered:

- Supplier Diversity Hubs
- Required Training for Council Staff



Training for Council Staff



Washington

“Washington state government employees must complete specific trainings before they manage contracts...”

- State Statute requirements for training
- Required training by job duty
- Documents guiding staff on what is required

Access, Outreach, and Engagement

Overview

- Limited English Proficiency (LEP) access and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access requirements assessed in outreach

Examples of Areas Covered

- Using funding to improve access
- E-mail signature blocks with LEP and ADA guidance

Using Funds to Improve Language Access



Virginia

“The United States Department of Transportation has published guidance concerning services and policies by recipients of Federal financial assistance from the USDOT related to persons with limited English Proficiency...”

- Concrete inspection test was only offered in English
- Virginia DOT became aware that several DBE firms were about to be removed from construction projects because they required certified concrete inspectors
- Federal funds were used to translate training materials into Spanish

Marketing and Communications

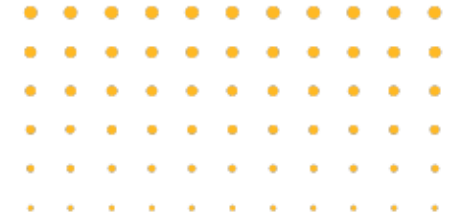
Overview

- Assessed requirements related to website functionality

Examples of Areas Covered

21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act Requirements

Infrastructure Assessment



Assessment Categories

Policies, Procedures, & Programs

- In light of the ask in the RFP, procurement policies, procedures, and practices were assessed more closely.
- This area of the assessment was most foundational after comparing policies, procedures, and programs through the field study and completing the infrastructure review.

People & Practices

- Silos and dysfunctions exist within the organization, but not at all levels of staff / work.
- Although there is positional power in theory, there is a lack of budget power like some field scan examples.

Data & IT

- Technology issues persist throughout the organization and impact reporting capabilities.
- In day-to-day practice, issues with accountability and requests for accountability across the organization exist and the Met Council could leverage practices from other organizations more.



Assessment Categories, Cont.

Training & Education

- A comprehensive procurement training exists and is offered quarterly and as requested. However, nothing is required in the same manner as the Washington example
- In response to prior feedback, more training and resources are available to business owners.

Access, Outreach, & Engagement

- Federal guidance exists pertaining to LEP and ADA access requirements and Met Council has some infrastructure in place but could use more in key departments.
- Staff are dedicated to outreach and with the team available engage certified businesses frequently.

Marketing & Communication

- Website functionality issues for small businesses seeking opportunities may be improved through the BPSI EAMS
- More language related to ADA and LEP may improve communication pathways with those communities.

Recommendations



POLICIES, PROCEDURES, & PROGRAMS

THE INFRASTRUCTURE

"We work a lot for larger electrics filling their DBE goals. When a payment is held up for the 9 reviewers needed that is postponing our payment. We have another 10 days to get paid after the prime. 2nd tier subs have hardship because of the added time. We have to borrow money to pay vendors and our labor."-Business Owner



- Most robust recommendations section with 31 recommendations
- Overall recommendations to leverage the tools and practices available more fully
- Advance efforts to address intergenerational mobility

PEOPLE & PRACTICES

THE FOUNDATION

"The CIM process would benefit from overhaul and streamlining to allow PMs to better forecast schedule requirements and track accountability throughout the process."-Staff Member

- Address silos and dysfunctions
- Advance appropriate staffing and budget investments
- Update and leverage tools available to increase accountability throughout



DATA & IT

THE TOOLS

“Make a better database so I can more easily find a vendor I need.”

-Staff Member



- Update/improve technology
- BPSI EAMS system may be a way to ensure that technological issues and lack of interoperability is addressed
- Create interactive dashboards

TRAINING & EDUCATION

THE WAY

“[F]airly new employee 2.5 year...It is more than clunky, there is no clear sense of the contingencies. Is there a way to put together a document of the process? If there is a yes to this step, go to this step. What externalities do I need to be aware of?”

-Staff Member

- Create a guide on how to do business with the Metropolitan Council and share it with business owners and staff
- Create a learning platform for business owners with video links, resources, and tools in one place.
- Require specific training sessions for staff at different levels and for those who purchase



ACCESS, OUTREACH, & ENGAGEMENT

THE PEOPLE

“How the new guy can connect; how do we get connected to the people who are in charge of the contracts; I realized that the Metro Council is huge but how do I get a contract that does not require an RFP, the small contracts, how do I find the things that they do not need an RFP. “

- Business Owner



- Update and execute ADA and LEP plans
- Meet and greets targeting businesses by size and contract opportunity size.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

THE STORY

“I did not know about this portal; having a search bar will help, instead of reading all the documents.”

-Business Owner

- Improve the overall user experience for the diverse spectrum of users visiting the Met Council’s pages pertaining to contracting and business inclusion through a user experience lens



Sample Workplan



OVERVIEW

This is shared as a sample tool that may be updated/edited to guide implementation of approved recommendations



Timeline

- Aggressive in light of what we know
- May be adjusted, but there is intentionality with some timing



Tasks

- Included as high-level suggested steps to advance.
- More subtasks on the granular level may be needed once you know more.



Departments

- Suggested collaborators
- Once a committee is formed may leverage that more



Outcomes

- KPIs and outcomes included
- May track on a dashboard



Lila Eltawely

Enterprise Equity Sr. Mgr., Office of Equity & Equal Opportunity

Lila.Eltawely@metc.state.mn.us

Ashanti Payne

Assistant Director, Office of Equity & Equal Opportunity

Ashanti.payne@metc.state.mn.us

