

Benefits of a diverse supply chain

How sponsoring your suppliers can strengthen your local business community

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Mr. Bennett: Sponsorship is such an important component to supplier diversity programs. There is a key difference between the mentorship and sponsorship. Now that you've actually spent that time in getting to understand that actual business owner, that CEO, their CFO, as well as what their capabilities are, sponsorship is really taking that additional step and then ultimately expanding those contract opportunities and also introducing them to peers, as well as other companies and customers that you have a relationship with to truly unlock additional opportunities and contracts that they could be competing for.

Some companies even go as far as looking at joint ventures and being able to form it with that business owner to truly be able to drive success within that entity to be able to compete on a larger scale as well. So many companies that you partner with from a supplier relationship, or even from a customer standpoint, could potentially be looking for additional capabilities. But one of the key roadblocks for some of those diverse suppliers is the RFP doesn't allow them to be able to compete. So, the one thing I would also really share is taking a close look at your RFP — and does it allow for you to pull small businesses and minority business enterprise into your supply chain process?

By having that sponsorship relationship with the company and identifying the actual needs and ways that you can truly help them is a really good way of not only impacting your current business, but ultimately impacting their business. You're making a difference in the local community and you're driving economic impact as well.