

WM2013 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 51B: Addressing the Small Business Barriers in Contracting with the US DOE

Co-Chairs: **Jim Fiore**, *Fiore Consulting*
John Coffman, *DeNuke Contracting Services, Inc.*

Panel Reporter: **Vanessa Vanover Hatfield**, *E2 Consulting Engineers, Inc.*

Panelists:

1. **John Hale**, *Deputy Director, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization*
2. **Jack Surash**, *Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Project Management*
3. **Matt Moeller**, *President, Dade Moeller*
4. **Steve Moore**, *President, Wastren Advantage, Inc.*

There were approximately 75 attendees present for the presentations, which focused on the US DOE's 2012 increase in its small businesses contracting goal from 6% to 10%. The challenges of meeting these goals with the declining US budget were addressed. The panel included two small business owners who discussed their direct US DOE contracts with regards to what has and has not worked for them. The panel was followed by a question and answer session in which small business attendees asked questions regard future direct prime procurements.

Summary of Presentations

John Hale stated that the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization is committed to increasing small business participation. As Deputy Director of the OSDBU, he is an advocate for small business work with DOE program offices and leaders, working to identify small business procurements. He encouraged small businesses to participate in DOE's annual conference and summits to network and hear the latest comments from DOE and DOE prime contractors. Mr. hall also encouraged small businesses to engage in teaming and collaboration with other small and mid-tier businesses when seeking contracts and well as responding to Sources Sought to get procurements set aside stating that at least two qualified responses are required to get a procurement set aside. He commented on the Mentor Protégé Program, stated that nine new agreements were signed in 2012 and there are 31 active agreements.

Jack Surash introduced John Evett, new Small Business Program Manager for DOE EMCBC office. He went on to discuss how his office was working to assist prime small businesses in becoming sustainable small businesses by increasing meaningful work, awarding longer term contracts, expand the ordering capabilities of small business programs to other DOE programs such as EM small business IDIQ's for D&D and increase awareness of EM sites. He gave an overview of the major small business contract awards for 2012 to include:

- Moab Mill Tailings Cleanup
- WIPP TRU Waste Transportation
- Hanford Occupational Medical Services
- WIPP Mobile Loading Unit Support Services

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Matt Moeller gave a brief overview of Dade Moeller; established in 1994; 200 employees; \$40M in revenues for 2012. Speaking from a small business owner's perspective on how small businesses can succeed in the DOE marketplace. Being a nimble small business is a benefit to DOE. Small businesses should consider their strengths when bidding DOE direct contracts and only bid when the scope fits the strength of their business model. He stated that he felt small business contracting could be improved if more emphasis was placed on "best value" rather than pricing alone. Additional comments regard improving success for small businesses included:

- Continual development of core competencies
- Provide "value added" services
- Understand contractor role and expectations
- Invest in adequate infrastructure for your business
- Leverage the small business experience to diversify

Steve Moore was challenged with speaking to how small businesses are less successful in the DOE market place. He made the following observations:

- Changing site conditions – small businesses are often slow to recognize and document changes
- Key personnel or Subject Matter Expert (SME) needs – small business often have difficulty bringing qualified resources to bear when issues arise
- Change control – small businesses typically struggle communicating changes to the necessary levels of DOE

He offered the following advice to small businesses:

- Know where you are and where you want to be – make sure you have aligned your systems and processes to maximize your capabilities
- Try to avoid over extending in all aspects of business (financial, capabilities, resources)