

“Diversity-Why is it Important?”

Submitted by: Amber Hamilton, Senior Buyer
City of Gainesville
Purchasing Division
P.O. Box 490
Station 32
Gainesville, FL 32627-0490
(352) 393-8771
HamiltonAM@cityofgainesville.org

When you first hear the word Diversity, notable historical changes such as race segregation, women’s rights, and cultural diversity are the most common thoughts that come to mind. However, there are other types of diversity that should be considered and challenges to overcome when dealing with diversity. Specifically within the Procurement profession, diversity in the workplace as well as diversity as it applies to suppliers is very important.

This paper will demonstrate why inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the workplace and suppliers is important to the procurement profession. This paper will also identify implications of diversity for procurement; within the office, entity, vendor relations and/or customer relations.

Diversity in the workplace is “the attempt by organizations to recruit and retain a multicultural, multi-talented workforce.” (NIGP: The Institute for Public Procurement, 2012) Today’s increasing globalization increases the need for better communication among people from diverse cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds. In procurement we no longer work in a one dimensional marketplace, but are now part of a worldwide economy with global competition. The procurement profession needs diversity in order to become more creative and demonstrate that it is open to change. If Procurement individuals respect diversity in the workplace, the profession could see an increase in productivity. In Procurement, we advertise and promote competitiveness in our suppliers, so having diversity in the workplace increases market opportunities and promotes competitiveness.

There is still a challenge in Procurement when it comes to diversity. Each professional should learn the skills of the multicultural work environment. Managers need to be open to and prepare themselves for leveraging the multicultural differences in their employees and their customers.

Procurement professionals need to focus on not just traditional diversity like race, gender and ethnicity, but take a deeper look into diversity that would benefit procurement when it allows an individual to come to work and function at their full capacity because they are at ease being themselves within the work environment. The procurement profession needs to embrace diversity of thought, diversity of background, diversity of experience, and diversity in education-not just the traditional aspects of diversity.

Additionally, there is also wide variety of generations in the workplace. In the Procurement profession you will commonly see professionals who are just starting out as well as those nearing retirement. Building diverse and collaborative teams with multiple generations can be a challenge. Haydn Shaw spoke at the 49th Annual FAPPO Conference in 2016 on the topic "Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart". His talk focused on the newest generation entering in the workplace, the Millennials. But all four current generations have their own priorities and viewpoints. Mr. Shaw's funny and informative presentation highlighted the need to embrace Millennials in the workplace. Millennials are recognizing that they are different and organizations need to learn new ways to work with them. In procurement, the success and competitiveness of organizations depends, in part, on the ability to embrace diversity such as different generations in the workplace, and then optimizing the benefits of these different generations' contributions.

Another important facet of diversity is Supplier diversity. This is a strategy that ensures a diverse supplier base in the procurement of goods and services. It emphasizes the creation of a diverse supply chain that works to secure the inclusion of diverse groups in the procurement plans. As part of the focus

of making the supply chain more competitive Procurement professionals should be seeking new suppliers, including those from different backgrounds and cultures. Innovation and flexibility often doesn't come from larger companies, but from smaller and more diverse companies, such as Minority-Owned Enterprise (MBE), Small Business Enterprise (SBE) and Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) suppliers. Supplier diversity is important because it can promote innovation through the introduction of new products, services, and solutions. Diversity in our Suppliers reinforces competition between the company's existing and potential vendors. It also illustrates the company's interest in and commitment to the economic growth of all communities. While diverse businesses can sometimes face barriers that challenge their start-up and sustainability, such as access to capital and networking opportunities, supplier diversity plans can ease these pain points.

A well thought-out supplier diversity plan benefits everyone, because it provides a place for sharing information, resources, tools, methodologies, and experiences to assist in the growth, expansion, and development of the industry. It is also important because it provides information to companies that are attempting to develop their own effective supplier diversity plan. As organizations share their experiences, they support success within other organizations and, in turn, build a stronger industry and stronger communities with stronger diverse businesses.

In conclusion, Diversity in the workplace and in suppliers is not only good for employers and employees, but also good for the welfare of the company. Having a diverse workplace allows for more open-minded co-workers. Also, having diverse workers benefits the company because they are the ones who can make positive connections with other companies and bring in new customers.

Supplier diversity programs can help to connect an organization more closely with its Suppliers and make them partners in the advancement of future projects. Supplier Diversity programs can help create new jobs and opportunities for minority and women owned businesses, which in turn helps us as Procurement professionals to connect our projects to the communities where they are placed. When we

strengthen those relationships with diverse-owned businesses, we as procurement professionals create drive for our organizations.

Works Cited

NIGP: The Institute for Public Procurement. (2012). *Public Procurement Dictionary of Terms*. Herndon: NIGP.