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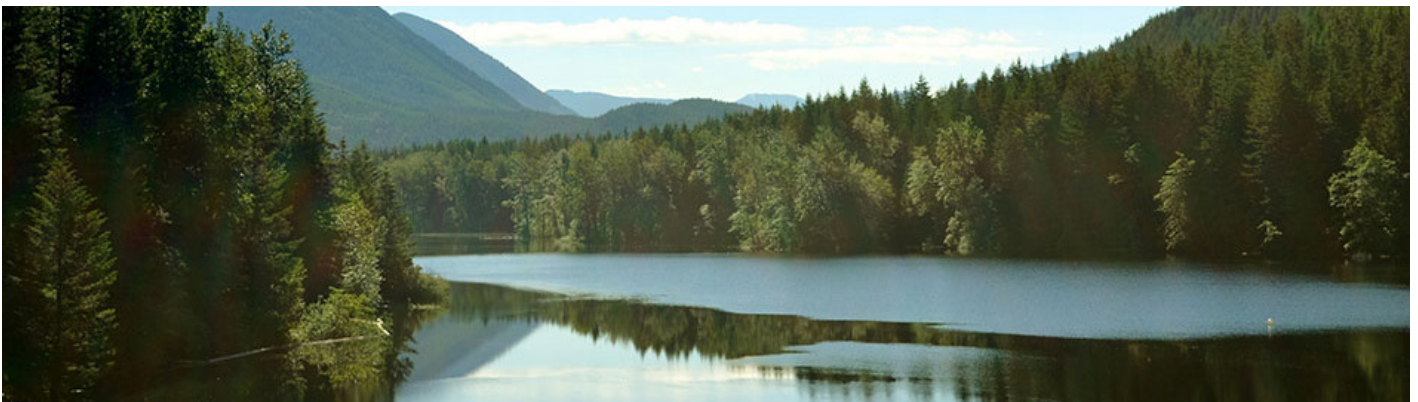
CONNECTIONS
Newsletter

Women & Minority Business Enterprises

ISSUE 03 // NOVEMBER 2021

WELCOME!

Welcome to our third edition of the WMBE Newsletter from Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), City of Seattle. This edition will take you through our WMBE work during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and provide tips on how to do business with the City. The City is continuing to prioritize and increase procurement and contracting with WMBE businesses despite these challenging times, and as always – we invite you to join us in our journey. Please review our [upcoming projects](#) for the latest consultant opportunities with the City!



Seattle Public Utilities: Vision & Mission

Seattle Public Utilities' mission is to foster healthy people, environment, and economy by partnering with our community to equitably manage water and waste resources for today and future generations. Our vision includes three components: COMMUNITY Centered, ONE Water, ZERO Waste. You can learn more about this on our [website](#). Through our vision, we will lead with equity and work in partnership with communities and employees to create a just and sustainable future.

Welcome Note: 2020 Contracting Impacts & Changes

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An important part of the work we do at SPU Contracts and Procurement is ensuring our customers have the tools and resources they need to be successful. To accomplish this, it requires us to be knowledgeable about our business, up to date on procurement requirements and best practices, and having the ability to be responsive and accessible.

In April 2020, COVID-19 took us from working in our offices and cubicles to “setting-up shop” in our homes, making in-person training, strategizing, and communication impossible. In the wake of all this, staff have been both resourceful and resilient. They have transitioned to laptops, cellphones, webcams, headsets; taken advantage of online training opportunities, and even conferences; and continue to actively engage and connect with customers. They have learned and become adept at applications, such as MSTEams and Webex, allowing them to stay connected, and AdobeSign, to help keep documents moving. Not everything has worked as well as we would have liked in this telecommuting environment, but having supportive and engaged partners, as yourselves, has eased the transition and made the hurdles so much more manageable. Thank you!



WMBE Firms during the Pandemic

Consulting

Given the events of 2020 SPU worked hard to continue essential work and adapt to a changing environment with minimal interruption. An example of one of our successful WMBE vendors that has been growing and was able to adapt and support our efforts during 2020 is, The Vida Agency.



Founder of The Vida Agency, Amalia Martino.

During an interview with Amalia Martino, founder and president of **The Vida Agency (WMBE - H)**, she shared on her experience working with SPU over the past four years. She began her work with SPU as a sub-consultant on our Drainage and Wastewater Ship Canal Water Quality Project. Since then, The Vida Agency has competed for and won a communications on-call contract. She shared with us the benefits of having a smaller contract to bid on, which allowed them the ability to compete and earn this work and that getting the response together was not as demanding. Capital projects can be massive, and the response is a massive undertaking that requires a lot of resources that many small firms don't have.

Founder Amalia shared that having the opportunity to work on real projects with SPU has allowed her firm to learn and grow, something that you only get through doing. During 2020 The Vida Agency was able to continue working and adapt their typically in person outreach to alternate COVID safe platforms. They felt SPU was responsive and available during unprecedented changes. They were given the time needed to adjust and get back to work. In their future work with SPU they are looking forward to building their relationship with the SPU communications group, being involved in overarching outreach strategies, as well as priming more contracts. Amalia ended by say, "I am so grateful to live in a place that prioritizes this (social equity)."



Staff at The Vida Agency.

Purchasing

2020 brought many challenges for all. For SPU some of these challenges were with our regular purchasing needs and unexpected purchasing needs that arose during the pandemic. SPU is grateful for our many partners that collaborated and were up to the challenge to keep our work moving. Some of the various vendors we relied on included **Western Fire & Safety (MBE - A)** and **Excel Supply Company (MWBE - A)**, who provided outstanding service and were at the ready to provide much needed supplies such as, gloves, hand sanitizer, face masks, Tyvek clothing, facial tissue, sanitizer wipes, bleach, bathroom tissue.



Additionally, there were several restaurants that helped keep our front line workers fed while the pandemic was going on, including:

- **By's restaurant in SODO (WMBE)**
- **Catering By Phyllis (WBE - W)**
- **Emerald City Fish & Chips (WMBE)**
- **Fou Lee Market (WMBE)**



Other notable firms that assisted SPU in our purchase service needs were **KolKay Electric (WBE)** who worked on EV Charger installations across SPU facilities along with **Talakai Construction (WMBE)** and **Len Can Builders (WMBE)** who provided standby support for elections/civil unrest efforts across the city. **These firms along with many others are examples of how SPU continued to support the business community during the pandemic, while supporting WMBE firms whenever possible. We are grateful to all of them and their employees for their service.**



Spotlight Article: What Advice do I have for Meaningful Partnering?

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This article reflects my own experience on meaningful partnering from over ten years of experience in the public and private sector, while recognizing that there are more strategies that lead to success beyond this article. I'd also like to point out that this article does not address the business and personnel aspects of keeping a firm successful.

What Makes a Good Consultant?

- A great leader or leadership team (often the project manager) that communicates well, identifies risks early and understands their role as the performance manager for their entire team (and for a prime consultant, that means the entire consultant team).
- An understanding of the entire team's strengths and weaknesses, not just the prime's staff but sub-consultant team members as well. And executing a plan to mitigate/manage team risks, gaps, or weaknesses.
- A commitment to quality – it is extra work that can sometimes be tedious, but it is what will separate your team from ordinary consultant teams. For primes, be responsible for quality assurance and possibly quality control of sub-consultant's work products (including estimating quality control cost and time when you are negotiating your contract budget and schedule).

I'd be interested to hear from you and would like to continue this conversation. Please feel free to reach out to me to discuss your thoughts and strategies for successful consultant teams.

What are Some Actions that Signal a Consultant Team is Committed to the City of Seattle WMBE Program?

- Working with established and **new** WMBE team members and sub-consultants, not just the ones you are already familiar with. Building a broader network of firms will help grow industry capacity and provide more opportunities.
- Expanding your team so that WMBE Inclusion Goals are met with work from more than one or two sub-consultant team members.
- *True partnering*: identification of specific **mentoring** relationships with specific goals, including an open discussion of potential challenges and how the team will manage said challenges, and an early evaluation of and thoughtful approach to resourcing gaps on the team or for a particular sub-consultant.
- Looking for opportunities to include WMBE firms even if it is non-core work and therefore does not add to your WMBE Inclusion percentage (for example, planning for potential future needs on a project).
- Looking for opportunities to add WMBE firms to the consultant team when scope is added to the consultant contract.

Connecting with SPU

- Are you a WMBE firm interested in partnering with SPU?
- Are you a non-WMBE firm interested in learning how to create a better WMBE Inclusion Plan?
- Are you a firm doing business with SPU and have contracting equity questions?

CONTACT US!

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UPCOMING EVENTS



DOING BUSINESS WITH THE CITY OF SEATTLE – NOW ONLINE!

Date: First Friday of each month

Time: 9am - 11am

Location: Online

<https://thebuyline.seattle.gov/>

TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE SPU WMBE CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER, PLEASE CLICK [HERE](#).

RESOURCES

[City of Seattle's Online Business Directory](#)

[City of Seattle's Purchasing & Contracting](#)

[Washington State Office of Minority & Women's Business Enterprises](#)

[Technical Assistance Program \(TAS\)](#)

[City of Seattle WMBE Inclusion Plans](#)