

Trip Report: Department of Energy Seventh Annual Small Business Conference

August 24, 2006

Submitted by: Mr. Dennis Ferrigno

Background:

On behalf of the Environmental Management Advisory Board, Mr. Dennis Ferrigno attended the Department of Energy's (DOE) Seventh Annual Small Business Conference sessions Tuesday, June 27 through Friday, June 30, 2006. DOE was represented at the mid-level management rank by Environmental Management, the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EE), the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste (RW), the Department of Science, the Small Business Office, and large DOE Management and Operating (M&O) Contractors. In addition, Federal entities, including the General Services Administration (GSA), the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Small Business Administration attended as well.

Mr. Ferrigno was tasked to:

- Observe conference activities and arrangements
- Solicit reactions and commentary from small-business representatives
- Identify the conference's strengths and weaknesses and provide feedback relating to these findings

Findings and Observations:

The DOE's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), Small Business Administration, and agency staff contributed to a successful conference and overall positive experience. With participation exceeding 1400 attendees and a noticeable improvement on prior sessions' small-business representation, the conference was well attended. However, large business attendance did not appear as robust as in previous years, with some attendees disclosing that they felt an obligation in support of marketing initiatives to attend, rather than a need.

The conference's featured sessions yielded mixed reviews:

The Business Exhibition was well received. Small businesses felt the exhibition provided a good forum to connect with and understand the missions and needs of the offices and organizations on display. A number of government agencies and programs participated by manning booths and exhibits, with the exception of EM. Contractor organizations on display allowed for networking and promoted discussion between themselves and the

small businesses in attendance. Overall, the exhibition was very popular and attributed to the positive experience. Similarly, matchmaking sessions were considered beneficial and the lobby area and socials allowed many of the participants to connect and interact.

Plenary sessions, meant to encourage small-business participation in DOE work, were oriented toward newer and novice organizations. Participants felt that future meetings should include preliminary workshops for the education of these organizations, while plenary sessions should focus on mid-level and advanced solicitation issues. The plenary sessions allowed little time for question and answer periods, and, like last year's conference, there was still no session in the plenary forum that addressed lessons learned and feedback from the small-business contractors.

Detailed project opportunity listings and advance forecasts were lacking once again. The presentations of opportunities essentially provided examples and requested the participants surf the Fed Biz Ops Webs site, as well as other sites, to search for their own opportunities. The general sentiment was that DOE should be right-sizing the small business opportunities to allow businesses to bid on projects that are within their administrative and financial grasp. Opening the bidding on an \$800 million contract to business with annual revenue between \$5 and \$10 is unreasonable, and brought criticism from the small business community. Some suggested that advance payment options for contracting would be beneficial and encourage small businesses to bid on more DOE work. These organizations do not necessarily have sufficient lines of credit from commercial banks to underwrite the payroll and capital necessary for supporting large contracts.

Recommendation 2006-11: In support of EM's small business goals, the program should increase its level of participation in future DOE Small Business Conferences.

Suggestions for Implementation:

- EM Deputy Assistant Secretaries (DAS) and DAS-level representatives should attend future conferences to demonstrate EM's commitment to small businesses.
- Assistant Secretary Rispoli should forward conference invitations to presidents in the M&O and contractor community to encourage large-business executive level attendance.
- EM should prepare and man a booth at the next Business Exposition to promote the program and educate attendees about its mission and opportunities.
- EM should investigate small-business assistance options, including zero-balance bank accounts, contract terms to provide back-stops for lines of credit vehicles, and abbreviated accounts payable periods.

Appendix A: Department of Energy Seventh Annual Small Business Conference Agenda

June 28, 2006
Seattle, Washington

Tuesday June 27, 2006	Wednesday June 28, 2006	Thursday June 29, 2006	Friday June 30, 2006 Matchmaking Forum
	7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. <i>Registration</i> North Lobby	7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. <i>Registration</i> North Lobby	7:30 a.m. - Noon <i>Matchmaking Registration</i> North Lobby
	7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. <i>Continental Breakfast</i> Hall 4D	7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. <i>Continental Breakfast</i> Hall 4D	7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. <i>Continental Breakfast</i> Hall 4D
	8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. <i>Plenary Session</i> 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. <i>Opening Session - Welcoming Remarks</i> 9:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. <i>Doing Business with DOE</i> 9:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. <i>Subcontracting Opportunities with DOE/NNSA Prime Contractors (Part I)</i> 10:30 a.m. <i>Business Expo Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony</i> Hall 4E 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. <i>Business Expo</i> Hall 4E	8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. <i>Plenary Session</i> Hall 4F 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. <i>The DOE Mentor-Protégé Program</i> 9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. <i>Energy Efficiency Panel</i> 10:00 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. <i>Subcontracting Opportunities with DOE/NNSA Prime Contractors (Part II)</i> 10:45 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. <i>Subcontracting Opportunities with DOE/NNSA Prime Contractors (Part III)</i> 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. <i>Business Expo</i> Hall 4E	8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. <i>Matchmaking Forum</i> Hall 4D
	12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. <i>Awards Luncheon</i> Hall 4F	12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. <i>NNSA Awards Luncheon</i> Hall 4F	12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. <i>Matchmaking Lunch</i> Hall 4D
	1:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. <i>Business Expo</i> Hall 4E 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. <i>Business Expo</i> Hall 4E 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. <i>Matchmaking Forum</i> Hall 4C

<p>4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. <i>Registration</i> North Lobby</p>	<p><i>Breakout Sessions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Procurement Protest Process</i> Click here for Presentation 1 Click here for Presentation 2 Click here for Presentation 3 Room 4C-1 • <i>Basic Project Execution (Part I)</i> Room 4C-2 • <i>Procurement Opportunities with Other Federal Agencies</i> Click here for Presentation 1 Click here for Presentation 2 Room 4C-3 • <i>Grants Programs</i> <p>3:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. <i>Breakout Sessions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Basic Project Execution (Part II)</i> Room 4C-2 • <i>Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Opportunities</i> Room 4C-3 • <i>Women-Owned Business Opportunities</i> Room 4C-4 	<p><i>Breakout Session</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Proposal Development: Developing the Winning Approach</i> Room 4C-2 • <i>Small Business Programs and Certifications</i> Room 4C-3 	
<p>6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. <i>Welcome to Seattle</i> Hall 4D</p>	<p>6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. <i>Small Business Reception & Buffet Dinner</i> TBD</p>	<p><i>Evening on own</i></p>	<p><i>Evening on own</i></p>

Appendix B: Department of Energy Seventh Annual Plenary Session Outlines

June 28, 2006
Seattle, Washington

Mr. Robert McGough of DynMcDermott Petroleum Operations Company

- Spoke to the performance of DynMcDermott Petroleum Operations Company in support of the DOE Strategic Petroleum Reserve Project Management Office (SPRO) in Louisiana.
- Addressed issues related to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) for leadership, program accountability, and strategic planning (<http://www.dynmcdermott.com/dmbaldrigeaward>)
 - The award was presented to the company in 2005, a first for a DOE M&O contractor.
 - The company's DOE performance goals included the application and recognition of fee for acknowledgement by the MBNQA

John Bashista, Director, DOE Office of Headquarters Procurement

- Addressed the DOE Business Model.
 - 85% of the \$21 billion goes to Facilities Management Contractors (FMC)
 - Internal acquisition review establishes advanced planning on which contracts are exclusive to small businesses versus those that are considered unrestricted
 - Mentioned the benefits of registering on the GSA schedules
 - Stated that OSDBU contract awards show that DOE can additionally target complex, large-dollar, procurements for small businesses
 - Cited Ports and Pad small business awards (\$400 million in small business goals met)
- Emphasized teaming and conference feedback during pre-solicitation periods was important.
- Encouraged small business to get involved in the draft RFPs and engage in one-on-ones within the procurement process.
- Stated that DOE was planning more multiple award-type contract vehicles.

Celinda Crawford, Director Office of Business Operations, DOE Office of Legacy Programs

- Spoke to upcoming LM Program nationwide acquisition, targeted for Small Business (\$ 200 million)
- Contracts are for 5 years and will be up for acquisition in fiscal year 2007
 - Technical
 - IT
 - Records
 - Property Management

- Administration

Larry James- Small Business Research Division, DOE Office of Science

- Explained what the Office of Science will be doing relative to energy security
- Presented the opportunity for interaction between small businesses and laboratory site representatives, minus the cost and time of travel to the sites.
- Laboratory and contractor representatives were generally from the small business or contracts side.
 - It would be helpful to have a technical person in the meetings to better articulate technical needs and project opportunities

Presentations for the plenary sessions can be found on the following site:

<http://smallbusiness.doe.gov/index.html>

Remaining talks are noted on the Seventh Annual Small Business Conference site:

http://www.smallbizconference.com/index.php?module=content§ion_id=2