

On April 30, 2024 and August 27, 2024, the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed County of San Diego (County) staff to increase small and local business participation in County contracts. County staff held listening sessions with the Board to gather input for improving the County's procurement and contracting processes. Based on the feedback from these sessions, an action plan was created to address the key themes heard across all listening sessions. It has been a countywide effort to enhance procurement and contracting. County staff provided updates on these actions through memos sent to the Board on July 29, 2024, and October 25, 2024. Below are key activities that have taken place to operationalize the action plan since the last memo.

#	Action Item	Lead Dept.	Status
1	Conduct an initial assessment on procurement policies and practices, specifically reviewing contract terms and conditions to create a tiered-risk approach.	Counsel, DPC, Risk Management	The initial assessment on the procurement policies and practices was completed and the last update was provided in the October 2024 memo. Review of the contract terms and conditions are underway, with the goal of a tiered-risk approach being available in contracts by September 25, 2025 when the policies are effective.
2	Reviewing current procurement standards at the County, including thresholds for forms of procurement (P-cards, RFP, RFQ, etc.)	DPC, Groups	<p>Ongoing, the last update was provided in October 2024 memo. Staff reviewed Assembly Bill 2019 and as a result, a Small Business Development Unit was created in EDGA with a designated a Small Business Manager to serve as a liaison with small businesses. Furthermore, per Board direction, DPC has established a goal of 25% of the County's procurement spend with small businesses and will be tracked and published in our annual diversity report that will also include details regarding the activities DPC has taken to support small business procurement participation.</p> <p>Finally, staff gathered feedback from the small business community on reciprocal certification recognition and will be developing a list of clearly defined certifications that the County will recognize with may include the federal Small Business Administration 8(a) certification. If the proposed policy changes are approved by the Board, this list will be effective September 25, 2025. Information on this list will be incorporated in community education and outreach efforts.</p>

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3	Work with community organizations, and establish benchmarks and community-oriented, outcome-based metrics to inform future goals on local business participation and diversity of suppliers.	DPC, EDGA, OERJ	<p>Ongoing. In accordance with the Board's direction, the local business preference is being recommended to increase from 5% to 15% and a goal of 25% of annual procurement spending with local small businesses.</p> <p>DPC will continue to analyze progress of disadvantaged business participation and registration as County suppliers in BuyNet. This will inform progress of current outreach activities and future strategies to diversify the supplier base.</p> <p>EDGA's Small Business Development Unit utilized feedback from Phase I of community engagement to realign the metrics in the technical assistance contracts of the Support, Training and Education for Procurement (STEP) program. Metrics are now standardized across the program and the impact of the STEP program will be measured by the number of small businesses who received technical assistance and were awarded a County contract. The new program metrics will allow the County to be better poised to make data-informed decisions about technical assistance support.</p>

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4	Implement an anonymous feedback survey for every procurement to gather input on where the County's processes could better support our business community.	DPC	<p>Complete. The anonymous feedback survey has been implemented in the County's online bidding system, BuyNet.</p> <p>One of the key questions asked in the post-solicitation survey is why businesses did not submit a response to a County solicitation. Some of the trends seen in the responses include: the requirements are too restrictive; there was not sufficient time to respond due to my first learning about the solicitation opportunity too late in the solicitation process; and the solicitation requirements were too difficult to understand. Many of the proposed policy changes and action plan to enhance procurement and contracting addresses some of the trends seen in the post-solicitation survey. For example, increasing the use of simplified procurement methods to make the process simpler faster and less costly for businesses and non-profits to participate in. Additionally, developing a forecast of procurements coming up in the next six months to help businesses and non-profits plan ahead—whether that means building capacity, forming partnerships, or simply getting the right paperwork in place. This information can help businesses and non-profits better compete for County contracts. Also, the County partners with the Small Business Development Center and APEX Accelerator to provide workshops, one-on-one support, and outreach events to support small businesses, nonprofits and community-based organizations who want to do business with the County. This program has been expanded to provide more support navigating the BuyNet system by including a 'BuyNet Lab' at outreach events where staff are available to help enroll businesses and troubleshoot issues.</p>

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5	Establish a pilot program to make contracting more accessible by looking at a select group of contracts from across the enterprise and analyzing how, why, when, and what we procure and making modifications to ensure we meet the needs of the community.	DPC, in conjunction with Groups	The initial pilot is complete, and this will expand to an ongoing effort accross all groups. Additionally, an action plan was drafted to address some of the findings of the pilot program. This action plan includes: identifying a set of core equity evaluation criteria; enhancing the ability to track subcontracting efforts in contracts; establishing standardized sustainability submittal items; and developing standardized labor compliance language to use in evaluation criteria.
6	Develop and formalize a partnership with the Council for Supplier Diversity to identify and build the capacity of small and diverse businesses	DPC, EDGA, OERJ	Complete. DPC became a member of the Council for Supplier Diversity in June 2024.
7	Develop a public facing procurement forecast to allow small businesses to plan for upcoming contracting opportunities from across the enterprise.	DPC	Complete. The procurement forecast is published on DPC's public facing website and is updated quarterly.
8	Conduct community listening sessions and set standing semi-annual forums to collaborate with local business communities in areas where the County can improve its services.	DPC, EDGA	Ongoing. Community listening sessions and local business engagement are core components of EDGA's work and embedded in regular operations. These ongoing efforts inform our strategies, programs, and policy development. Updates on community engagement were provided in the memo in October 2024. Recent rounds of engagement are summarized in the Community Engagement and Findings Report. We will continue to engagement the community through a variety of methods including forums on at least a semi-annual basis.
9	Investigate sustainability related attributes for priority product categories and provide resources to program staff to consider in the use of statements of work and/or evaluation criteria.	OSEJ	The investigation is complete; four priority product categories were selected and incorporated into Board Policy B-67 which is one of the policies that will be included in the package of policy updates included in Item 15 below.

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10	Create a pilot grant program to fund insurance and/or bonding costs for minority/small businesses. Program structure to incorporate feedback received from community engagement.	EDGA, OERJ	The Bonding and Underwriting Insurance for local development (BUILD) and the Compliance, Operations and Readiness Education (CORE) program will be launched summer of 2025. CORE program aims to prevent labor violations and promote fair business practices by providing small (micro) businesses and nonprofits across San Diego County with expert-led administrative and bookkeeping assistance. The BUILD program intends to address common barriers such as bonding and insurance requirements by offering direct support and resources. A single contract has been selected to administer both programs and the program design was developed based on feedback received from the business community and subject matter experts.
11	Leverage the Departmental Sustainability Plans completed by every office/department to prioritize at least one procurement-related commitment for short-mid term completion.	OSEJ	Complete. Every department has included at least one procurement-related commitment in their Departmental Sustainability Commitments.

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12	Develop program to provide technical assistance to small businesses through County staff. Program structure to incorporate feedback received from community engagement on what technical assistance will be the most meaningful.	EDGA, OERJ	<p>Complete. In December 2024, the Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs (EDGA) established the Small Business Development Unit and appointed a dedicated Small Business Manager. The Manager serves as a liaison to the small business community, working across departments and with external partners to deliver technical assistance, expand procurement access, and strengthen the small business ecosystem.</p> <p>The Small Business Manager now oversees the County's technical assistance contracts, aligning them with community feedback and enhancing performance metrics to ensure services are effective and data-driven. The Small Business Manager also connects businesses with County staff who provide hands-on support with procurement processes and issue resolution. Additionally, the Department of Purchasing and Contracting (DPC) offers BuyNet Labs at outreach events to provide in-person guidance on navigating the County's procurement systems.</p>
13	Engage with the business community in order to fully leverage data collection in the new BuyNet system to provide insight on how local, small businesses are navigating the procurement system and where improvements could be made	DPC, EDGA, OERJ	Complete. Encouraged suppliers registered in BuyNet to complete the demographics section of their company profile in order to fully leverage the data collection in the new BuyNet system. Supplier data collected via BuyNet has been mapped to County spend data to produce a report indicating the spend breakdown by owner demographic. In addition to this, we expanded "BuyNet Labs" in our outreach events which provide technical assistance to small businesses in how to register in BuyNet and navigate the system.
14	Initiate an assessment of opportunities for sharing, reusing, repairing, remanufacturing, and upcycling exiting materials and products. Produce recommendations for partnerships, programs, and policies to expand and re-form holistic material management practices and include true-cost accounting (e.g. life cycle carbon balance).	OSEJ	In process. The contract for this assessment is expected in the Summer of 2025.

Enhancing Procurement and Contracting Practices

ATTACHMENT O

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15	Return to the Board with a full package of policy updates related to procurement practices to codify successful and beneficial practice changes into requirements, including the reimagining of the County's Environmentally Preferable Procurement policy.	DPC, OSEJ	Recommendations have been included in the June 24, 2025 Board Letter.
16	Update training materials and internal administrative manuals to ensure practice changes are documented and all levels of staff are involved in implementation.	DPC, Groups	Pending approval of the policy updates by the Board, applicable procurement policies, procedures and guidelines will be updated in advance of the implementation on September 25, 2025.
17	Encourage a culture of feedback and including all levels of staff and the community in collaborative efforts to evaluate policies and practices that center community outcomes and are responsive and accountable to the changing business environment in the region.	All	Ongoing. Initial internal and external outreach was performed and will continue on an ongoing basis.

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