



Community Engagement & Findings Report

Enhancing Procurement and Contracting Policies

June 2025

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I. Overview

Background

The County of San Diego (County) is deeply committed to building a more inclusive and resilient regional economy, especially through supporting the prosperity of small businesses, nonprofits and community-based organizations. This is being achieved through a variety of programs and services, and also through leveraging its purchasing power – with over \$2 billion spent annually on contracts alone. Recognizing the impact of this, the County is working to enhance its procurement and contracting practices to increase equity and sustainability, and support local businesses, especially small, diverse businesses and nonprofits. On April 30, 2024 (12), and August 27, 2024 (22), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved actions to strengthen procurement and contracting by directing the Chief Administrative Officer to:

- Explore strategies to expand opportunities for local businesses to participate in County contracts.
- Provide recommendations to:
 - Formalize local participation in County contracts
 - Improve methods to identify local small businesses, including non-profits
 - Increase the local business preference
 - Establish a small business advancement policy
 - Create a comprehensive technical assistance program
 - Develop an insurance and bond assistance program

The work to enhance procurement and contracting practices is a large-scale, collaborative effort threaded through the Department of Purchasing and Contracting (DPC), the Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs (EDGA), the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ), the Office of Equity and Racial Justice (OERJ), and the Office of Ethics, Compliance, and Labor Standards (OECLS). Staff from these departments have been working with diverse stakeholders and community members to implement a variety of programs and solutions.

Purpose

Community engagement and feedback are critical to the success of this initiative, and a phased approach has been implemented to ensure meaningful participation throughout the process. In Phase I, which took place August 2024 to early April 2025*, the County sought broad, high-level feedback from diverse stakeholders on how to improve procurement and contracting practices. The objective was to gather insights that would inform the development of programs and policies. Based on the feedback received, staff have been developing solutions that reflect key themes and priorities, including reviewing the policies governing procurement and contracting practices. The County is considering updates for the following policies:

- [Board Policy A-81, Procurement of Contract Services](#)
- [Board Policy A-87, Competitive Procurement](#)

- [Board Policy B-39a, Veteran Owned Businesses \(VOB\) and Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise \(DVBE\) Program](#)
- [Board Policy B-53, Small Business Policy](#)
- [Board Policy B-67, Environmentally Preferable Procurement](#)
- [Board Policy A-71, San Diego County Economic Development](#)
- [San Diego County Code of Administrative Ordinances Article XXIII, Sections 400-405](#)

Phase II of community engagement, which occurred mid-April 2025 to mid-May 2025, measured stakeholder alignment with proposed procurement policy changes from Phase I, and collected detailed feedback on three new policy elements. These elements are:

- Criteria for Small Business – Define which businesses qualify as small under County procurement programs.
- Definition of Nonprofit Organization – Clarify eligibility requirements for nonprofit entities for consistent and fair access.
- Business Certification Reciprocity Program – Consider recognizing other public agency certifications to ease small business participation and reduce administrative burdens.

The feedback gathered from stakeholders is invaluable and the County has already begun applying the input to develop and enhance services and policies, ensuring that the needs and concerns of the community are addressed. On June 24, 2025, it is anticipated proposed changes to procurement policies and updates on new and enhanced programs will be presented to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

Moving forward, the County will continue to utilize the data in this report to inform decision-making processes, ensuring that policies and new programs are aligned with the community's expectations and requirements. Ongoing engagement, communication, and data collection will continue and be essential in ensuring the County remains transparent and accountable.

Methods

Multiple strategies to gather feedback, promote transparency, and ensure access and equity were used throughout the phased process. Engagement activities were intentionally varied to reach a broad and diverse group of stakeholders, including businesses, nonprofits, veteran-owned businesses, community organizations, and internal County staff. These included focused stakeholder meetings, online surveys, internal County department meetings, key stakeholder discussions, webinars, and community workshops.. These activities not only provided updates on proposed policy changes but also offered meaningful opportunities for participants to engage and shape the outcomes.

An initiative page on Engage San Diego, the County's online engagement platform, was established as a comprehensive resource for providing updates and information. It also serves as a venue for stakeholders to share feedback and ask questions. The Business Contracting webpage can be accessed here: [Business Contracting | Engage San Diego County](#).

The County made significant efforts to reach out to a wide range of community stakeholders to encourage their participation in this initiative. Please refer to Appendix H for a comprehensive list of nearly 400 organizations that have been contacted and engaged. Promotional efforts for Phase II were shared via email to over 4,200 individuals as well as promoted on County social media.

Phase I

The County released a survey and conducted key stakeholder interviews to gather broad, high-level feedback on how to improve procurement and contracting practices. Insights from these activities informed the development of a draft policy framework. Additional feedback on this framework was collected through internal department stakeholder meetings, external stakeholder meetings, Business Contracting webpage comment submissions, webinars, and workshops.

Phase II

The County then tested and refined the proposed policy changes through a feedback survey posted on the Business Contracting webpage and through continued key stakeholder discussions. A series of five virtual stakeholder meetings were also held, each tailored to specific audiences such as small businesses, nonprofits, and veteran-owned businesses. These meetings helped explain proposed changes and facilitated focused discussions. Additional engagement occurred through internal County stakeholder meetings, direct feedback submitted via email and the Business Contracting webpage, and public events, where staff gathered input through interactive methods. Based on feedback received, refinements, such as a revised definition of a small business, were incorporated and shared in the most recent virtual meeting.

Analysis

Staff used several tools for data analysis, including the built-in features of the Engage San Diego platform and Microsoft Forms. For qualitative analysis, individual comments were summarized and then reviewed to identify key themes. A secondary review was conducted to ensure accuracy and capture all significant themes. Limitations of the data collection are detailed in Section IV: Data Limitations.

Findings

The following section summarizes key themes and feedback gathered across all engagement activities during both phases of this initiative. Stakeholders provided thoughtful, candid input that reflects a shared interest in improving the County's procurement policies and practices.

Overall Findings

- **Broad Support for Procurement Improvements:** Stakeholders expressed strong, consistent support for the County's initiative to enhance procurement policies and practices. Many shared appreciation for the County's willingness to engage partners and improve accessibility and transparency.

Recommendation: The County should continue to build on this momentum by maintaining open lines of communication with stakeholders and ensuring their feedback continues to inform implementation efforts.

- **Communication and Transparency:** A common theme was the need for improved communication between the County and small local businesses, non-profits, business assistance providers and community leaders. This includes more transparent processes, consistent follow-up during the bidding process, better access to support resources, sustained outreach and engagement to build relationships that promote dialogue and trust between the County and stakeholders.

Recommendation: While outreach and communication improved during Phase II, the County should continue to build from and expand on the current momentum of engagement to further cultivate positive relationships and collaboratively develop solutions.

- **Assistance Navigating the Procurement and Contracting Process:** Across both phases of engagement, small business owners consistently emphasized and County staff recognized the need for additional resources and technical assistance to navigate the County's procurement and contracting process. Many felt at a disadvantage by complex language, lengthy solicitations, and restrictive requirements, and requested clearer guidance on how to submit proposals and address technical components.

Recommendation: The County should continue to invest in focused outreach, plain language resources, and expanded hands-on technical assistance to better support small businesses in successfully navigating the procurement process.

- **Supporting Subcontractor Inclusion and Collaboration:** Businesses have shared that prime contractors often lack incentives to support subcontractors. There is also strong interest in tools such as directories of veteran-owned or small businesses and more creative avenues to foster collaboration between primes and potential subcontractors.

Recommendation: The County should explore policy and programmatic options to incentivize prime contractors to engage and support subcontractors, such as creating connection tools like vetted business directories or matchmaking events.

- **Addressing Insurance Barriers for Small Organizations:** Small nonprofits and businesses highlighted that current insurance requirements often create significant barriers to participation. Many suggested scaling insurance requirements to the size and risk level of the contract and allowing flexibility for contractors to demonstrate low-risk activities.

Recommendation: The County should consider adopting a more proportional and flexible approach to insurance requirements to reduce barriers for smaller organizations and encourage broader participation.

Policy Specific Findings

- **Desire for Clarity on Policy Implementation:** While stakeholders expressed support for the new procurement policies, they were also concerned with understanding the implementation of policy changes, as well as the need for more education, communication, and resources. Questions focused on definitions (e.g., small business, nonprofit and veteran owned-business sizing, environmentally preferable products), documentation requirements, tracking mechanisms, and timelines – highlighting that policy changes are just the beginning of a larger conversation.

Recommendation: The County should develop a clear communication and education plan, including guidance documents, timelines, and outreach efforts to ensure businesses, organizations, and County staff understand how to comply with the new policies.

- **Data Collection and Accountability:** Stakeholders emphasized the importance of tracking the implementation and impact of new procurement policies, calling for transparency and mechanisms to verify bidder information. Stakeholders were also concerned about the misuse of small business designations, including instances where larger entities might create or control smaller ones solely to access contract opportunities.

Recommendation: The County should establish robust data collection and verification systems to monitor compliance and deter abuse of small business classifications, ensuring transparency and trust in the procurement process.

- **Business Certification Process Improvements:** There was strong support for the County to expand the types of certifications it recognizes, with calls for a clear and consistent core list. Stakeholders emphasized the value of accepting certifications issued by other public agencies to reduce redundancy and streamline access. However, concerns were raised about the burden of certification and renewal processes which can be time-consuming and administratively taxing. While many supported the idea of self-certification to improve access, there were also some concerns about the potential for misuse without proper safeguards.

Recommendation: The County should implement a reciprocal certification recognition program that formally accepts certifications from other public agencies, avoiding the need to create a new County-specific certification process. This approach reduces administrative burdens on businesses while expanding access. Additionally, the County should consider extending the accepted certification renewal periods and incorporating basic verification checks for self-certification to maintain accountability.

- **Equity and Nonprofit Inclusion in Procurement:** Nonprofits have unique challenges such as limited staff and grant-based operations compared to small businesses. Stakeholders had mixed views on how to best incorporate equity goals and nonprofit participation in procurement. Some stakeholders called for distinct procurement paths, adjusted scoring, or designated budgets to level the playing field for nonprofits and small businesses.

Recommendation: The County should explore differentiated procurement mechanisms or set-

aside programs to better integrate equity goals and improve nonprofit competitiveness in the contracting process.

These findings reflect a collection of input from stakeholders over many months. County staff have already been working to make impactful changes new programs in response to what was heard. Examples include of new and enhanced programs and practices include:

- December 2024, the Small Business Development Unit with a dedicated Small Business Manager was created in the Office of Economic Development and government Affairs (EDGA). The Small Business Managers serves as a liaison with the small business community and to collaborate with multiple departments and external partners to develop and implement programs that provide technical assistance, facilitate procurement opportunities, and foster a supportive ecosystem for small businesses.
- To further address specific feedback on technical assistance needs, the County partnered with the Small Business Development Center and APEX Accelerator to provide enhanced 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.
- County staff provide “BuyNet Labs” at outreach events to help enroll businesses in BuyNet and troubleshoot issues on the spot.
- The County is now proactively compiling lists of contracts and services anticipated to be repocured within the next six month and posting that list publicly. This Procurement Forecast is available on the [Department of Purchasing and Contracting](#) webpage.
- In the Summer of 2025, the County will be launching two new pilot programs:
 - Bonding and Underwriting Insurance for Local Development (BUILD) offers direct support and financial resources to small business who are ready to contract with the County but are unable to afford the bonding and/or insurance requirements.
 - Compliance, Operations and Readiness Education (CORE) aims to prevent labor violations and promote fair business practices by providing small businesses and nonprofits across San Diego County with expert-led administrative and bookkeeping assistance.

These findings and the data in this report will continue to inform ongoing efforts and guide future improvements to ensure more inclusive, transparent, and equitable procurement processes.

II. Feedback Collection

Phase I

Table 1. Community Engagement Activities Phase I

Engagement Activity	Period of Activity	Number of Participants
Business Feedback Survey	August 16 – September 30, 2024	211
Enhancing Procurement Practices External Stakeholder Meetings	August 16 – September 30, 2024	25
Key Stakeholder Discussions*	May 19, 2023 – March 14, 2025	100
Internal Stakeholder Meetings	February – April 2, 2025	1,121
Webinars: County Contracts in 2025: What's New for Small Businesses Advancing Prosperity: Enhancing County Contracting in 2025	March 4, 2025	75
	March 12, 2025	25
Business Contracting Webpage Comment Form	March 5 – 26, 2025	21
Workshops	July 9 and 22, 2024; January 31, 2025	191

*Discussions that informed the development of Board Policy B-67 began in May 2023.

Business Contracting Survey

From August 16 to September 30, 2024, EDGA, in collaboration with DPC and OERJ, conducted a survey to identify the needs of businesses and organizations seeking to successfully bid on providing goods and services that support county government operation. The survey focused on businesses, particularly small businesses, and non-profits, who are interested in contracting with the County. The survey consisted of 23 questions designed to gather input on the following:

- The business's experience(s) bidding for County contracts.
- Why businesses may not have, now or in the past, bid on County contracts.
- The business's input on how the County could improve its procurement process.

Overview of Participants

Most of the respondents indicated they are minority and/or women owned businesses, with a number of veteran and disabled veteran-owned participating as well. Most business owners

stated they had 20 or fewer employees and most respondents reported annual revenue of under \$1 million. Health and social services was the largest responding sector with construction, professional and financial services, and IT/telecommunications also well represented. A large majority of the businesses were headquartered in San Diego county, while other businesses identified as either in-state or having offices within the county.

Enhancing Procurement Practices External Stakeholder Meetings

EDGA staff met with 25 stakeholders to share information on the survey and the overall effort to evaluate and strengthen the County's purchasing and contracting process. In addition, the stakeholder meetings were an opportunity to listen and learn what organizations need to increase the diversity of businesses and organizations successfully bidding for County contracts, particularly local small businesses.

Overview of Participants

EDGA staff contacted nearly 40 organizations to participate in key stakeholder discussions. The participating stakeholders included small businesses, non-profits, business ecosystem partners, labor organizations and community groups.

Key Stakeholder Discussions

One of the core engagement activities conducted as part of the procurement policy review was a series of key stakeholder discussions. These were one-on-one conversations with individuals and organizations representing a broad range of perspectives, sectors, and areas of expertise. Designed to function similarly to key informant interviews, these discussions allowed for more in-depth dialogue, enabling stakeholders to share nuanced feedback, raise specific concerns, and offer informed recommendations that may not have surfaced in broader engagement settings. This approach ensured that the policy development process was grounded in practical insights and informed by the diverse experiences of those most impacted by procurement practices.

In Phase I, a total of 14 key stakeholder discussions were held by DPC and OSEJ to provide stakeholders with high-level policy updates and opportunities to provide initial feedback on broad themes. Overall, interactions were positive and stakeholders expressed excitement about the policy changes.

Overview of participants

Key stakeholder discussions included current County contractors, nonprofit organizations and associations, certification bodies, and local/regional agencies.

Internal Stakeholder Meetings

Another key engagement activity involved a series of Internal County Stakeholder Meetings with staff and leadership from various departments. These meetings were essential to understanding how proposed procurement policy changes would impact day-to-day operations. Individuals who work directly with contractors – including both businesses and nonprofit organizations – provided valuable insight into potential challenges, unintended consequences, and opportunities for

improvement. The feedback that was received helped ensure that any policy updates would be practical, implementable, and aligned with the operational realities of County departments, while also identifying changes that could increase efficiency and effectiveness in procurement processes.

In Phase I, a total of 43 meetings were conducted with internal County staff by DPC and OSEJ, reaching over 1,100 County staff. These meetings were focused on informing County staff and collecting feedback on possible enhancements to procurement practices and policies. This process ensured that diverse perspectives from various departments were considered. The insights gathered during this phase were instrumental in developing the policy framework, and drafting updated policies aligned with identified themes and priorities. Internal stakeholders expressed feedback on the impact of potential policy changes in creating efficiencies for daily County operations, as well as expressed an interest in additional resources and training.

Overview of Participants

Internal stakeholder meetings included representatives from all four business groups and various leadership levels, from contracting officer representatives to department directors.

Webinars

In Phase I, webinars served as a method to conduct broad outreach to the business community to share the overall vision of the policy enhancement effort and highlight the key proposed changes for feedback.

1. County Contracts in 2025: What's New for Small Businesses

On March 4, 2025, the Live Well San Diego Business Sector hosted the “County Contracts in 2025: What’s New for Small Business” webinar. A presentation provided an update on the effort to enhance the County’s procurement and contracting practices. The vision for forthcoming policy changes was shared. A recording of the webinar was posted to the Business Contracting webpage.

Overview of Participants

Over 3,000 individuals from the Live Well San Diego community sectors were invited, including representatives from businesses, chambers of commerce, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and rural organizations. More than 80 small business representatives attended from multiple industries including construction, nonprofit, professional services, health, and technology.

2. Advancing Prosperity: Enhancing County Contracting in 2025

On March 12, 2025, a presentation on the effort to enhance the County’s procurement and contracting practices and the vision for forthcoming policy changes was shared during EDGA’s Advancing Prosperity webinar series. The overall sentiment of the feedback was positive, with an appreciation for the collaboration with the business community. There were requests for continued sharing of information and engagement.

Overview of Participants

The Advancing Prosperity: Enhancing County Contracting in 2025 webinar focused on re-engaging the over 120 organizations that had been contacted for the Business Feedback Survey and the Enhancing Procurement Practices External Stakeholder Meetings. Over 20 business community leaders attended, including representatives from various business assistance organizations and from organizations participating in the Anchor Collective, a group of the region's largest employers working to advance the economic conditions of the San Diego region.

Workshops

In partnership with community and university partners, OSEJ held three in-person workshops that informed the development of how the County can increase sustainability considerations into procurement and contracting practices. Two workshops were held in July 2024 with a combined total of over 140 attendees. These workshops included roundtable discussions with participants expressing the need to shift cultural values that favor consumerism, to increase fix it fairs, and to reduce single use plastic regionwide. On January 31, 2025, a workshop was held that brought together local jurisdictions and regional agencies, community-based organizations, and non-profits to envision methods to re-form our waste streams and efforts toward a circular economy. Participants expressed interest in regional resources and education to support greener purchases.

Overview of participants

Participants of these three workshops included the general public, local city staff, and individuals representing nonprofit and community organizations, as well as businesses.

Other

In addition to the structured engagement activities, the County also gathered input through other informal but valuable channels, such as email communications and attending other events. For example, over 120 County staff were reached through email communications that included seeking department priorities for product categories and opportunities to share comments and ideas on how to make it easier in making greener choices when buying goods.

Phase II

Table 2. Community Engagement Activities Phase II*

Engagement Activity	Period of Activity	Number of Participants
Proposed Policy Change Survey	April 28 – May 15, 2025	9
Virtual Stakeholder Meetings:		
Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies	April 28, 2025	111
Small Business Focused Stakeholder Meeting	May 1, 2025	5
Non-Profit Focused Stakeholder Meeting	May 5, 2025	23
Veteran Focused Stakeholder Meeting	May 7, 2025	5
Progress and Next Steps: Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies	May 15, 2025	32
Key Stakeholder Discussions**	April 18– May 15, 2025	42
Internal County Stakeholder Meetings	April 16 – May 15, 2025	443

*For the purposes of this report, data for Phase II was cut off on May 15, 2025, however, engagement activities continued past that date. Feedback will continue to be collected.

**Multiple discussions may have been held with single stakeholders

Proposed Policy Change Survey

To gather broad feedback on the proposed procurement policy changes, the County conducted an online survey from April 28 to May 15, 2025, through the Business Contracting page on Engage San Diego. The survey was designed to assess how well the proposed changes reflected input previously shared by stakeholders during Phase I of engagement, including feedback from surveys, stakeholder meetings, and webinars. It also provided an opportunity for participants to offer additional insights on how the proposed changes might impact their ability to do business with the County. The survey highlighted key proposed changes focused on simplifying procurement processes, expanding small business and nonprofit participation, increasing support for veteran-owned businesses, and promoting environmentally preferable purchasing. Participants were asked to evaluate each proposal and share whether the changes aligned with

feedback they had previously provided. Open-ended questions allowed stakeholders to suggest additional policy changes and share potential impacts from their perspective. This engagement method provided a transparent and accessible way for a wide range of stakeholders to weigh in on the County's draft proposals and ensured that final recommendations were grounded in community and industry input.

Overview of Participants

Despite extensive promotion of the survey, nine individuals provided responses. Of those who responded, the following sectors were represented: nonprofit, business support, government, health/social services, information technology/telecommunications, professional services/financial services, vehicles and transportation.

Virtual Stakeholder Meetings

A series of five virtual stakeholder meetings were a key component of Phase II of the procurement policy engagement process. These meetings were designed to serve multiple purposes: (1) provide an update on the County's ongoing efforts to enhance procurement and contracting practices; (2) present the proposed policy changes that were shaped by input gathered during Phase I (see Appendix C); and (3) facilitate targeted discussions to gather feedback on critical topics, including how the County should define a small business for the expanded Small Local Business Preference Program, whether to include nonprofits in the program, and the feasibility of creating a reciprocal certification process to recognize certifications issued by other public agencies.

The virtual format allowed for broader participation and accessibility, reaching a wide audience of more than 4,200 stakeholders, including businesses, business support organizations, nonprofits, nonprofit advocates, public agencies, and interested community members. The meetings were promoted through multiple channels, including direct outreach, County social media and updates to the Business Contracting page on Engage San Diego, which included RSVP links and meeting details. To further increase access and transparency, recordings of all five meetings were posted online for stakeholders who were unable to attend live. These virtual engagements played a critical role in ensuring that a diverse range of voices could weigh in on proposed changes and help shape a more inclusive and effective procurement policy.

Overview of Participants

Over 420 individuals RSVP'd for these meetings, representing the following sectors:

- Architecture/Engineering
- Business Support
- Construction
- Facility Maintenance Services
- Food Services
- Government
- Health/Social Services
- Information Technology/Telecommunications
- Manufacturing

- Nonprofit
- Professional Services/Financial Services
- Security/Safety
- Vehicles and Transportation

1. Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies, April 28, 2025

This meeting served as the formal kick-off to Phase II and was geared toward a wide audience. Of the 187 who RSVP'd, all sectors listed above were represented with the top 3 sectors being nonprofit, health/social services, and business support. Over 100 individuals attended.

2. Small Business Stakeholder Meeting, May 1, 2025

This meeting was focused on the small business and business support community. Of the 57 who RSVP'd, all sectors listed above were represented with the top sectors being business support, professional services/financial services, nonprofit and health/social services. Five individuals attended.

3. Nonprofit Stakeholder Meeting, May 5, 2025

This virtual meeting was focused on the nonprofit and nonprofit support organization community. Of the nearly 100 who RSVP'd, the following sectors were represented, with the vast majority being nonprofit:

- Business Support
- Construction
- Food Services
- Government
- Health/Social Services
- Information Technology/Telecommunications
- Nonprofit
- Professional Services/Financial Services

Twenty-three individuals attended.

4. Veteran Stakeholder Meeting, May 7, 2025

This virtual meeting was focused on the veteran business owner community and organizations that support veteran business owners. Of the 21 who RSVP'd, all sectors listed above, except for security/safety, were represented with the top being government. Five individuals attended.

5. Progress and Next Steps: Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies, May 15, 2025

The purpose of this meeting was to share how feedback from four virtual stakeholder meetings has shaped the proposed enhancements to the County's procurement policies and present the County's next steps. The target audience was anyone who had participated in the previous stakeholder meetings or other Phase II engagement activity. Of the 73 who RSVP'd, all sectors listed above were represented with the top 3 sectors being nonprofit, health/social services, and business support. Over 30 individuals attended.

Key Stakeholder Discussions

As part of Phase II, focused discussions were held with 22 organizations with 42 participants to gather in-depth feedback on the proposed policy changes. These conversations focused on how the changes would impact small businesses, nonprofits, and veteran-owned businesses, as well as how to make it easier to make greener choices when buying goods. These meetings provided an opportunity to walk through proposed policy changes, clarify details, address concerns, and ensure the policies reflected stakeholder priorities and lived experiences.

Overview of Participants

Discussions which primarily focused on the expansion of definition of small businesses were led by the Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs. Of the 17 organizations contacted, 12 engaged in discussions with approximately 13 participants. Some discussions continued over multiple meetings.

Organizations

1. Asian Business Association of San Diego
2. Capital Impact Partners and CDC Small Business Finance
3. County of San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce board
4. Executive Office of the California State Treasurer
5. Prebys Foundation
6. San Diego Workforce Partnership
7. SAY San Diego
8. SBCS
9. Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
10. Supplier Diversity Council
11. The Nonprofit Institute-USD
12. YMCA San Diego

Additionally, DPC held one discussion with approximately 14 members of Community Action Partnership Advisory Board to discuss high-level policy updates.

Discussions with a primary focus on environmentally preferred purchasing were led by OSEJ. Out of the 45 stakeholders contacted, a total of 10 key stakeholder meetings were held. Participants include:

- Certification bodies: Cradle to Cradle, Forest Stewardship Council, GreenScreen Certified, Greenhealth Approved, BIFMA, SCS, USDA BioPreferred
- Current County vendors: Staples and Grainger
- City of Encinitas, which shared that the city is looking to update their policy.
- Responsible Purchasing Network, which is an international nonprofit leader working on model policies, tracking tools, and educational resources to support adoption and implementation of environmentally preferable products.

Internal County Stakeholder Meetings

A total of eleven internal County stakeholder meetings were convened during Phase II to gather feedback from County departments involved in procurement and contracting. These meetings helped assess operational feasibility, identify implementation considerations such as trainings and resources, and to ensure alignment between proposed policy changes and internal processes. For example, OSEJ held three ‘open house’ meetings to review with County staff and seek direct feedback and comments on the draft Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy.

Overview of Participants

DPC attended the Public Health Services Managers meeting with 256 attendees consisting of Director, Assistant Director, Chiefs, and other levels of management within Public Health Services. EDGA met with the Executive Director of the Office of Military and Veteran’s Affairs as well as the Assistant Director of Self Sufficiency Services to gather insights on engaging with the Veteran business owner community and how the policy changes might affect those stakeholders. For the OSEJ-held ‘open house’ meetings, nearly 130 County staff across business groups attended and provided comments.

Other

In addition to the structured engagement activities, the County also gathered input through other informal but valuable channels. Between April and May 15, stakeholders submitted questions via the Business Contracting webpage, with two inquiries received and publicly responded to on the site to ensure transparency and broader access to information. County staff also received direct email feedback from individuals and organizations, which helped to further inform the policy development process. Additionally, as part of the County’s Earth Day celebration, staff hosted an information table focused on the proposed changes to the Environmentally Preferred Procurement Policy. During the event, an interactive activity was used to engage attendees and collect feedback in a more accessible and engaging format. These activities provided additional opportunities for community input and expanded the reach of the County’s engagement efforts beyond traditional meetings.

III. Results

Phase I

Procurement and Contracting Practices Feedback

The first goal of Phase I was to collect broad, high-level feedback from diverse stakeholders on how to improve procurement and contracting practices. The responses through the Business Feedback Survey, External Feedback Survey and Engage Comments form provided the County with the following insights into the needs of the business community:

- Sustained outreach and engagement with local small businesses, non-profits, business assistance providers and community leaders to build relationships that promote dialogue and trust between the County and stakeholders.
- More training and technical assistance programs for small businesses to navigate the procurement process.
- New programs that assist with insurance and bonding requirements to allow small businesses to be more competitive in the procurement process.
- Information provided on upcoming County procurements should be shared earlier in the procurement process along with additional time to respond to procurements.

In addition to the survey results, several ideas were brought to County staff's attention on how the County could further support small businesses during this engagement period. Each of these proposed ideas supplements and supports the activities of the items within the ongoing effort to enhance procurement and contracting practices, while also potentially filling the gaps in local small business assistance programs. As of this report's publication, many activities in response to these requests have been implemented or are being developed:

- Pilot program to assist small businesses with labor compliance issues.
- Pilot employee ownership/succession planning program to provide small businesses that are community fixtures a path for continued operations while also allowing for the owners to create a retirement plan and turn the business over to either employees or a local entrepreneur.
- Supplier diversity conference to showcase the work the County is doing to promote more inclusion and diversity in local suppliers.
- Pilot project to assist small businesses in buying the building or land where their business is located, to foster community development and creation of generational wealth.
- Interactive map locating small business assistance organizations, support programs and grant opportunities across the county.

Proposed Policy Change Framework Feedback

Building off insights from earlier activities, a draft policy framework was developed and shared for feedback. When asked about the County's proposed direction for improving procurement and contracting practices, stakeholders expressed overall support and appreciation for the changes under consideration. Many respondents welcomed the County's efforts to simplify processes, increase procurement authority limits, and make language more accessible. The feedback affirmed that the County was moving in a direction aligned with the needs of small businesses and community organizations.

However, respondents also highlighted several persistent challenges within the existing procurement system. A recurring theme was the complexity and length of current solicitations, which many small businesses described as overly burdensome and difficult to navigate, especially when compared to solicitations from other public agencies. Several participants emphasized that the language in previous solicitations was hard to interpret and disadvantaged smaller firms that lacked the capacity to hire outside support.

Respondents shared the following insights and recommendations:

- **Support for Changes:** There was strong support for increasing procurement thresholds and simplifying procurement language, with several stakeholders noting that these changes would improve access and reduce administrative barriers.
- **Challenges for Small Businesses:** Many small business owners described feeling disadvantaged by the County's procurement processes, citing unnecessarily complex language, overly broad scopes of work, and the length of solicitations.
- **Clarification and Technical Assistance:** Stakeholders expressed the need for clearer guidance on submitting proposals and navigating technical aspects of the application process.
- **Recommendations for Process Improvements:** Suggestions included adopting fixed labor rates, establishing a formal procurement protest process, and reducing administrative burdens in application requirements.
- **Equity and Non-Profit Participation:** Opinions were mixed regarding how best to integrate equity goals and non-profit inclusion into the procurement process, with some expressing concerns about fairness and consistency.
- **Small Business Standards:** Recommendations included developing more reasonable and appropriate small business standards for general contractors in public works to level the playing field.
- **Communication and Transparency:** A common theme was the need for improved communication between the County and vendors, including more transparent processes, consistent follow-up during the bidding process, and better access to support resources.

- **Sustainability Guidance:** Comments and input from key stakeholders such as County staff, County vendors, and certification bodies were positive and included a variety of recommendations and ideas on making greener choices when buying goods. County staff particularly expressed interest in trainings and step-by-step education materials to support purchasing decisions.

This feedback provided essential insights into the barriers stakeholders face and underscored the need for not only policy change but also improvements in communication, transparency, and vendor support to ensure equitable access to County contracting opportunities. As referenced in the findings section above, the County has used this data to implement new and enhanced programs and policies.

Phase II

Phase II focused on measuring stakeholder perspectives on the alignment with proposed procurement policy changes and gather feedback on new components, including criteria for small businesses, definitions for nonprofit organizations, and certification reciprocity. For details on the proposed policy changes presented to stakeholders, see Appendix C.

Proposed Policy Change Survey

A total of nine individuals completed the Proposed Policy Change survey. With this small response, numbers may not be fully reflective of the target audience. Additionally, 44% of respondents shared this was their first time providing feedback which may have skewed the data.

Respondents noted that the policy changes would help small businesses compete and reduce barriers. Concerns were raised regarding insurance requirements as a barrier, as well as calls for more business support, data resources, and outreach to BIPOC businesses. Some comments highlighted the need to distinguish between large and small nonprofits, suggesting different considerations for each.

Virtual Stakeholder Meetings

Similar to the Proposed Policy Change survey, a majority of the poll respondents during the first stakeholder meeting stated this was their first time providing feedback. This indicated that although outreach was conducted during Phase I, increased outreach in Phase II was necessary. Outreach conducted during Phase II was successful in reaching a broader audience. Additionally, stakeholders in all meetings very clearly expressed the need for more education, resources, and support for all organizations in navigation through the County's procurement process and understanding how these policies will be implemented. There were calls to ensure metrics were monitored for these proposed changes to ensure they were achieving the intended outcomes. Several organizations requested the County consider ways to better foster collaboration such as connecting subs with primes as well as collaborative bidding models.

The majority of the discussion in the Virtual Stakeholder meetings were on the *Small Local Business Preference Program*.

- Participants raised issues regarding the lengthy certification process.

- Strong support for a core list of recognized certifications and clear guidance on documentation. Broad support for recognizing certifications from other public agencies. However, there were concerns raised about certification renewal periods—recommend multi-year renewals to reduce administrative burden.
- Many requests for self-certification options though a few expressed concerns about some businesses self-identify as small without verification.
- Some requests for flexibility for businesses partially owned out-of-state.
- Suggestions to define size of veteran owned businesses as some may be large.
- Many stakeholders feel the term “small nonprofit” is unclear or unhelpful—suggest removing “small” and instead focusing on revenue, staffing, and impact metrics.
- Requests for clarification on size limits.
- Nonprofits highlight unique challenges like limited staff, grant-based operations, and inflexible insurance requirements. They urged the County to allow scaled contract terms, flexible service delivery, and adjustments for volunteer-run organizations.
- Multiple calls for separate evaluation pathways or budgets for nonprofits and small businesses to avoid inequitable competition.
- Emphasized certification should be a first filter, followed by performance-based evaluation at the RFP stage.

Discussions about changes effecting *Veteran-Owned & Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses* were mostly positive, with general support for DVBE and VOB inclusion in the small local business preference programs. There were calls for additional outreach to these groups and for the County to provide lists of these businesses so larger businesses could connect with them. There was also a recommendation for the County to consider providing benefits to a veteran-led nonprofit, as it does not qualify as a veteran-owned business.

Key Stakeholder Discussions

For the discussions which primarily focused on the expansion of definition of small businesses, all stakeholders expressed overall support for the expansion of the small business definition, including the addition of nonprofits. It was suggested that nonprofits be defined as a 501(c)(3) with paid employees, to ensure that nonprofit organizations have capacity to do the contracted work. The County was also cautioned by stakeholders about the potential for larger companies or nonprofits owning small businesses and using the small business to bid on County contracts.

Other comments and recommendations included suggesting that the County explore ways to encourage and incentivize primes to do more for subcontractors, such as covering insurance. There was support for the programs that will be administered by EDGA for small businesses, such as the Bonding and Underwriting Insurance for Local Development (BUILD) pilot program and the Compliance, Operations and Readiness Education (CORE) pilot program, administered in partnership with OECLS. BUILD offers direct support and financial resources to small business who are ready to contract with the County but are unable to afford the bonding and/or insurance requirements. CORE aims to prevent labor violations and promote fair business practices by providing small businesses and nonprofits across San Diego County with expert-led administrative and bookkeeping assistance.

Additional comments included recommendations for the County to expand outreach to rural areas and for County department heads or subject matter experts be involved in contract negotiations, not just the Department of Purchasing and Contracting.

Across all key stakeholder discussions focused on the environmentally preferred purchasing, over 80 comments were received that were in support of the policy, suggestions/recommendations for additions and/or refinements to the policy, and accompanying resources and/or references for future iterations. The comments also indicated additional ideas and considerations for future updates and aligned efforts that bring sustainability considerations into the procurement and contracting process.

Internal County Stakeholder Meetings

Almost all the internal stakeholder meetings in Phase II were regarding environmentally preferable purchasing. OSEJ reached nearly 130 County staff across all business groups by hosting three virtual open house meetings to review the draft policy and seek direct feedback. The comments were around specific guidance in the policy, recommendations for including existing County efforts/policy in the alignment section and sought clarification in the responsibility of departments in the implementation section of the policy. County staff particularly expressed a desire for trainings and resources and offered ideas based on their learning preferences. OSEJ also joined meetings that included County staff from across sustainability, purchasing, and executives to share the draft policy, collect feedback, and address questions.

Other

Comments received via email and questions on the Business Contracting webpage primarily focused on suggestions for process changes such as the consideration for difference set asides, recommended enhancements to document search for the Documentum interface, and comments on data and tracking. There was also a call for the County to provide benefits to Disadvantaged Business Enterprise certified businesses. In addition, 130 responses were received as part of an interactive activity at the County's Earth Day Fair, which was attended by over 300 people, including County staff and the public. Comments shared by attendees informed guidance documents to the environmentally preferable purchasing.

IV. Data Limitations

- Attendee data for all virtual meetings was limited based on the platform and may include duplicates. Where possible, County staff were removed from the attendee count. There may be other instances in which participant numbers were unable to be de-duplicated or for County participants to be removed from the count.
- Additional outreach and engagement activities occurred past May 15, 2025. For the purposes of this report, preparation data up to May 15, 2025 is included. However, County staff continue to engage with community, businesses, and other stakeholders to enhance procurement and contracting practices.
- Phase II was implemented on an accelerated pace and may have hindered some stakeholders' ability to fully engage.
- Data from Phase II indicated that many stakeholders had not been engaged in Phase I regarding policy changes. This may have affected the type of feedback stakeholders were able to provide in Phase II.

V. Appendices

- A. Phase I Business Feedback Survey Summary
- B. Phase I Business Contracting Webpage Comments
- C. Proposed Policy Changes Handout
- D. Phase II Proposed Policy Changes Survey Data
- E. Phase II Virtual Stakeholder Meeting Feedback Data
- F. Phase II Key Stakeholder Meeting Data
- G. Summary of Environmentally Preferable Procurement Outreach and Engagement
- H. Organizations Outreached and Engaged

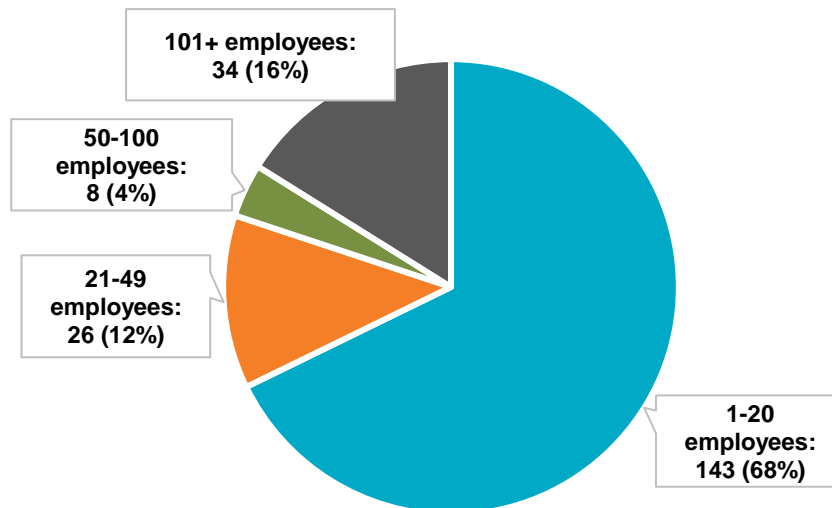
Appendix A- Phase I Business Feedback Survey Summary

Business Feedback Survey

The following is a summary of select questions from the survey which was administered through the Business Contracting Engage San Diego webpage from August 16, 2024- September 30, 2024

Total Respondents: 211

- Which of the following best describes the size of your business organization?



- Which sector applies best to your business organization? (Select all that apply)

Category (may select more than one)	Responses N (%)
Health/Social Services	49 (16%)
Construction	46 (15%)
Professional Services/Financial Services	41 (14%)
Information Technology/Telecommunications	23 (8%)
Architecture/Engineering	17 (6%)
Facility Maintenance Services	16 (5%)
Manufacturing	11 (4%)
Vehicles and Transportation	11 (4%)
Food Services	10 (3%)
Security/Safety	8 (3%)
Other*	66 (22%)

*Other: Administrative Work; Advertising, Video Production And Media Buying; Aerospace; Animal Services/Dog Training; Arts & Education; Association, Marketing And Communications; Biohazard Cleaning Services; Book Wholesaler; Book Wholesaler For Libraries; Bulk Fuel/Oil; Child Care And Early Education; Communications, Marketing And Community Outreach; Conservation And Mitigation Bank; Coworking Space, Office Space Rental; Creative Services; Dealer Of Machinery For Machine Shops & Metal Fabrication; Defense Contractor; Digital Printing, Promotional Items; Economic/Workforce Development; Education, Organization And Leadership Development; Education, Training, And Talent Development; Education/Language School; Education/Youth Art Classes; Educational Outdoor Gear Retailer/Wilderness First Aid And CPR; Educational Services/Applied Theatre; Electronic Recycling; Energy Technology; Environmental Equipment; Firefighting And Law Enforcement Equipment And Services; Fitness/Health; Furniture, Printing / Copying / Banners; Graphic Design, Advertising, Website And Digital Marketing Services; Housing, Research; Incentive Company; Laboratory Supplies; Landscape Maintenance; Led Message Signs; Library; Lodging Services; Member Association, Advocacy, Policy And Research; Office Furniture Sales, Service, Installations, And Moving/Storage; Office Furniture, Sales Service And Installation, Moving And Storage; Planning, Design, Natural Resources, Environmental Services; Promotional Products And Embroidered Apparel; Public Safety Biometrics; Remote Sensing & Drone Data/Imagery Collection; Rentals, Youth/Rural Serving; School Supply; Special Events And Business Development; Supplier Of Office Supplies, Paper Goods, Janitorial Supplies, Health And Medical Supplies; Supply Personal Services; Video & Photography Services Training Academy; Video/Photo Production; Vending Machine Operator; Wholesale & Retail Bookstore (Chinese Book & Magazine, Publisher – Education).

- Has your business or organization ever submitted a bid or proposal for a County of San Diego solicitation?

Question Options	Responses N (%)
Yes	116 (55%)
No	81 (39%)
I don't recall	13 (6%)

- Do you consider any of the following a barrier to bidding for a County contract? Select all that apply.

Barriers (may select more than one)	Responses N (%)
Process is too difficult and/or confusing	96 (21%)
Requirements are too restrictive	79 (17%)
Insurance requirements are too restrictive	48 (11%)
Insufficient time to put the bid together	46 (10%)
None of the above	42 (9%)
Bid opportunities do not align with our area of expertise	36 (8%)
Scope of work is too large for my business/organization	34 (8%)
Bonding requirements are too restrictive	32 (7%)
Other*	40 (9%)

**Other: The following represents the comments provided by those who selected “other” for barrier to bidding for a County contract. While the comments are presented as originally written and have not been edited for clarity, an effort was made to organize them by category or topic.*

Lack of Awareness and Information:

- Did not know of options
- Need to learn how to participate
- Not sure at all about my area
- Not informed or we don't know where to look
- Didn't know where to apply. Now I think I do.
- Have not seen any opportunities available.
- Have applied for and received County grants. Was not aware of other contracting/bidding opportunities.

Challenges for Small Businesses:

- For small businesses, micro businesses for large prime I do understand, but for those of us that are graduating and working our way up the ladder it's a bit too restrictive, and we will never gain a contract.
- Bids requirement with County association too restrictive for small businesses.
- Most projects that are small enough for a small business to participate in are also set aside or preference for additional disadvantages.
- Many of the healthcare contracts are given to the same companies that have worked with the County previously and are geared toward larger companies not small companies.
- Not enough opportunity awarded to small business to compete with the larger established business always getting the bids.
- Regarding government contracts, the solicitations include small businesses to apply, but when they are awarded, we have noticed they have been given to large national companies. This seems unethical, because the companies being awarded are national companies. To me, that is not a definition of a small business. It is very disappointing to provide everything they requested on the proposal in hopes we can win part of the award, not even a full award, that would at least give me a feeling that we are all being given an equal opportunity.
- GIS Services opportunity is not listed separately. It's always clubbed with other opportunities and made big in size so one small business will not be able to provide services.
- As a Small Business, we spend a lot of time trying to track down what goals are applicable to each project so we can advertise the value we bring to the project we are bidding. Have the goals clearly listed, and the planholders/bidders lists clearly posted is extremely helpful.

Nonprofits

- When the Pricing Schedule is provided on a cost-basis, it makes it challenging for a private organization to bid on a contract. We recommend a fixed unit rate price structure that places non-profits and private contractors on a level-playing field.
- Third-party billing requirement is onerous for a small non-profit. Infrastructure is needed and the return is 6 months or longer and is minimal in comparison to the cost of submitting claims. If this was a sustainability option for non-profits, it doesn't work.
- The payment schedule is a burden. We're a small nonprofit and need funds (at least half of the payment) upfront to more easily cover expenses.

Process and Requirements

- The new BuyNet is difficult to use. For example, if looking up an RFP, your search must exactly match the title. Most recently the title was all caps, every time I tried searching for it, it came up "no record". With hundreds of bids out at any given time, this is very time-consuming.
- BuyNet is TERRIBLE.
- Step-by-step process convoluted.
- The system to evaluate potential contracts is too complicated.
- Out-of-date specifications with the rest of the industry make bidding County projects difficult and time-consuming. Please update your specifications to the latest Caltrans specifications for the sake of the entire industry.
- It is so complex and takes so long to put together a bid that it's not worth it to pursue. The County ended up awarding a giant food bid to one vendor which I think is a big risk in case their facility has some issue. A very large ongoing contract like that could be split up into different sections of the County to have backups in case of emergency and also to provide more opportunities to more vendors.
- Budgets are too small.
- If we knew the bidding range it allows for us to ensure we can compete.
- PLA Requirements.
- PLA's would be a complete NO BID for us, we always look forward to bidding San Diego county.
- Often the County does not have a direct spec for our services although with a stronger appetite for new tech there could be.
Scope of work restrictions.

Support:

- No hands-on help provided from non-profit organizations, only videos to watch and such a long process to go through it. Business owners have no 10-hour time to watch videos. No quality effective 1:1 support.
- They never send out bids related to IT. Also, we are never given feedback despite putting in a lot of effort. We win several contracts with the State of California. We are known to be very responsive and very meticulous with our responses. But County of San Diego is a different ball game altogether.

Specific Business Concerns:

- My company provides onsite EMS for special events - not ongoing.
 - My firm provides IT and GIS Services; these opportunities are always part of large solicitations. We can perform IT and GIS Services work but we never received any opportunities notifications where we qualify. We also learned that the County does not have any opportunities for local businesses or socio-economic categories except Disabled veteran-owned goals. The County is not encouraging socio-economic business category goals. Makes it challenging for a microbusiness to compete in open competitions.
 - As the contractor who helps others with proposals, they employ my expertise to help them with the process.
 - I sent my price to the prime contractor and they didn't use me, only took my price. I think they used my price only and they didn't use me. I can't become a prime because of the bond and need more money to perform the contract.
 - I would like projects within the training and org development scope. As I said, I have all the requirements and references. Many of these RFPs are too large or require specific qualifications for engineering or other professional services. I am a sole proprietor WOSB with a cadre of trainers, facilitators, coaches, and consultants. I have been in business for over 30 years and have great referrals and a BBB A+ rating.
 - No contacts.
 - No sunscreen lotion opportunities.
- In your experience, please rate how easy it is to use the BuyNet system and process with 1 being 'not easy at all' and 5 being 'very easy'?

Question Option	Responses N (%)
1- Not Easy at All	28 (14%)
2- Not Easy	42 (21%)
3- Neutral	84 (41%)
4- Easy	38 (19%)
5- Very Easy	11 (5%)

- In your experience, please rate the quality of the following from 'very poor' to 'very good'.

	<i>Rating Scale</i>					No response
	Very Poor	Somewhat Poor	Neither poor or good	Somewhat good	Very Good	
Sufficient notice about upcoming bid opportunities	27 (13%)	49 (24%)	64 (31%)	49 (24%)	18 (9%)	2
Outreach Activities to small businesses and organizations	46 (22%)	52 (25%)	62 (30%)	32(15%)	17 (8%)	0
Access to County Staff to ask questions about bids	39 (19%)	47 (22%)	59 (28%)	32 (15%)	32 (15%)	0
Response time from County staff on questions	29 (14%)	33 (16%)	75 (36%)	36 (17%)	33 (16%)	3
Feedback from the County on proposals	42(21%)	39 (19%)	79 (39%)	30 (15%)	14 (7%)	5
Overall communications about County bids and processes	36 (17%)	46 (22%)	69 (33%)	39 (19%)	16 (8%)	3

- Would you like the County to provide more technical assistance and outreach to businesses and organizations to support them in the bidding process?

Question Options	Responses N (%)
Yes	144 (68%)
No	15 (7%)
Unsure	52 (25%)

- Rank the technical assistance and outreach items that would you the most when bidding for County contracts with 1 being your most preferred. *Note: respondents were asked to place the seven items below in a rank order. No fill in option was provided for "Other".*

Technical Assistance and Outreach Items	Overall Rank of Preference	Average Rank Score
Earlier notification of upcoming solicitation opportunities	1	2.7
Information sessions	2	3.2
Training programs	3	3.5
"How to" materials (print and web based)	4	3.5
The ability to provide input on solicitation design	5	3.7
Performance updates on prior contracts	6	4.1
Other	7	4.9

Appendix B Phase I- Business Contracting Webpage Comment Form Summary

March 5, 2025-March 26, 2025

Respondents: 21

Prompt Provided:

The County will be taking a big step to formalize and support the work being done in these areas by recommending the Board approve significant changes to procurement policies built around the following goals and objectives:

Simplifying current procurement policies:

- *Provide clearer and easier to understand language when describing procurement rules and procedures.*
- *Make it easier to cite and reference procurement rules.*
- *Combine similar policies when possible.*

Expanding procurement authority limits:

- *Increase most procurement authority limits.*
- *Expand the use of simplified procurement methods, which reduce barriers to participation for small businesses.*
- *Further expand the use of simplified procurement methods when the award is set-aside for small-local businesses.*

Increasing the County's local business preference:

- *Expand eligibility for the County's local business preference to include non-profit organizations.*
- *Expand the certifications accepted.*
- *Provide flexibility for modified implementation of the local preference to comply with State and federal rules.*

Enhancing local participation:

- *Establish a 25% small business participation goal.*
- *Expand the subcontractor participation requirement to include small-local businesses.*
- *Expand payment options to small businesses and non-profit organizations.*
- *Expand opportunities for small businesses to participate in the Procurement Card (P-Card) program.*

Feedback Summary:

- **Support for Changes:** Several commenters appreciated the changes, especially the increase in procurement authority limits and the simplification of language.
- **Challenges for Small Businesses:** Small businesses found the previous language difficult to understand and felt disadvantaged against larger companies. They emphasized the need for more direct and simpler language. Other respondents stated the County had solicitations that, in comparison to other government agencies' solicitations, were exponentially longer than any others and were too large in scope of work.

- **Clarification Requests:** Some commenters requested clarification on how to proceed with proposals and other technical assistance.
- **Procurement Process Improvements:** Recommendations included using fixed labor rates, providing a procurement protest process, and simplifying application requirements.
- **Equity and Non-Profit Participation:** Mixed opinions were expressed about including non-profits and equity-based procurement incentives.
- **Healthcare Services:** Specific feedback was given on the need to address issues in healthcare service procurement, particularly for Drug Medi-Cal services.
- **Small Business Standards:** Suggestions were made to set reasonable small business standards for general contractors in public works.
- **Communication and Transparency:** Several commenters emphasized the need for better communication, transparency, and proactive follow-ups from procurement officers.

Demographics:

- Have you ever applied for a County contract??

Question Options	Responses N (%)
Yes, and was awarded	8 (38%)
Yes, but was not awarded	6 (29%)
No	7 (33%)

- Which Sector(s) applies best to your business or organization? (Select all that apply)

Category (may select more than one)	Responses N (%)
Construction	6 (19%)
Health/Social Services	5 (16%)
Architecture/Engineering	3 (9%)
Business Support	3 (9%)
Non-profit	3 (9%)
Government	2 (6%)
Professional Services/Financial Services	2 (6%)
Information Technology/Telecommunications	1 (3%)
Manufacturing	1 (3%)
Security/Safety	1 (3%)
Vehicles and Transportation	1 (3%)
None	1 (3%)
Other*	3 (9%)

Other: Auto Parts And Tires; DNA Services; Drug And Alcohol Testing Services; Environmental.

Appendix C- Proposed Policy Changes Handout



Proposed Procurement and Contracting Policy Changes

The County of San Diego (County) has been gathering input to improve its procurement and contracting policies with the goal of reducing barriers, promoting sustainability, and increasing equity and access—especially for local small businesses and nonprofits.

Based on feedback collected through surveys, stakeholder meetings, and webinars, the County has drafted a set of proposed policy changes. We are now seeking your input on how well these proposed changes reflect the feedback you and other stakeholders previously shared.

Visit engage.sandiegocounty.gov/small-business-contracting for more information and to share your input.

Simplifying Procurement Processes

1. Proposed Change- *Simplified Process Up to \$500K*

The award limit for using a simpler, faster procurement process (like Request for Quote (RFQ)) would increase from \$100,000 to \$500,000 per year.

What This Would Mean:

More contracts are anticipated to be awarded through the RFQ process, which is typically quicker, more straightforward, and less costly for businesses and nonprofits to participate in. This reduces the time and resources needed to compete for County contracts, especially when compared to more formal processes like Requests for Bids (RFB) or Requests for Proposals (RFP). Overall, this change makes it easier for businesses to work with the County, especially small businesses and small nonprofits.

2. Proposed Change: *Simplified Process Up to \$1M for Small Local Business/Nonprofits*

When contracts are reserved for small local businesses, the County would be able to use a simpler procurement process (RFQ) for awards up to \$1 million per year.

What This Would Mean:

By increasing this limit from the previous limit of \$100,000, we're creating even more opportunities for small local businesses (including veteran-owned businesses and nonprofits) by reducing paperwork and speeding things up. This helps grow our local economy and supports businesses right here in our community.

Small Business Preference Program

3. Proposed Change: *Small Local Business Preference Increase to 15%*

Increasing the small-local business preference from 5% to 15%, and raising the cap from \$50,000 to \$150,000.

What This Would Mean:

Local small businesses and nonprofits would get a bigger competitive boost when bidding for County work. Their price will be evaluated as if they were up to 15% cheaper, helping them better compete with larger companies.

4. Proposed Change: *3% Small Local Subcontracting on Large Contracts*

Large contracts (over \$1 million per year) for services, professional services, and public works would

require or encourage at least 3% of the work to go to small local businesses (including veteran-owned and nonprofits).

What This Would Mean:

Larger public works and services contracts would have requirements to include or encourage the use of small local businesses (including veteran-owned and nonprofits) as subcontractors—ensuring that more County dollars remain in the local economy.

Veteran-Owned & Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Program

5. Proposed Change: *Veteran Owned Businesses Count as Small Businesses*

Expanding the definition of a small business to include veteran-owned and disabled veteran-owned businesses.

What This Would Mean:

Veteran-owned businesses would now qualify for the same programs and benefits as other local small businesses and nonprofits. That includes access to simplified procurement opportunities for contracts up to \$1 million per year. This change helps open more doors for veteran-owned businesses and recognizes their role in strengthening our local economy.

6. Proposed Change: *Higher Amount for Direct Awards to Disabled Veteran Business*

Increasing the amount the County can spend directly with disabled veteran businesses—from \$50,000 to \$75,000—without needing a full competitive process.

What This Would Mean:

It would be easier for disabled veteran businesses to work with the County, helping honor their service while growing their presence in our local economy.

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

7. Proposed Change: *Greener Product and Vendor Choices*

Adding clearer guidance on how to choose environmentally responsible products and vendors. This includes using items that are reusable or refurbished, avoiding harmful chemicals, and selecting products that save energy and last longer.

What This Would Mean:

We're making greener choices when buying goods—without limiting competition or driving up costs. It's a smarter, more sustainable way to spend public funds.

The following are the current policies being considered for updates:

- [Board Policy A-81, Procurement of Contract Services](#)
- [Board Policy A-87, Competitive Procurement](#)
- [Board Policy B-39a, Veteran Owned Businesses \(VOB\) and Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise \(DVBE\) Program](#)
- [Board Policy B-53, Small Business Policy](#)
- [Board Policy B-67, Environmentally Preferable Procurement](#)
- [San Diego County Code of Administrative Ordinances Article XXIII, Sections 400-405](#)
- [Board Policy A-71, San Diego County Economic Development](#)

Appendix D- Phase II Proposed Policy Changes Survey Data

Survey Dates: April 28, 2025-May 15, 2028, Business Contracting Engage San Diego Page

Total Responses: 9

1. Which sector applies best to you business or organization? Select all that apply.

Category (may select more than one)	Responses N (%)
Nonprofit	6 (43%)
Health/Social Services	2 (14%)
Business Support	1 (7%)
Government	1 (7%)
Information Technology/Telecommunications	1 (7%)
Professional Services/Financial Services	1 (7%)
Vehicles and Transportation	1 (7%)
Other*	1 (7%)

*Other: Shared Housing and Homeless Community Outreach

2. Please select which of the engagement activities you have participated in to-date. Select all that apply

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Survey	2 (14%)
Webinar	2 (14%)
Stakeholder Meeting	4 (29%)
This is my first time participating	4 (29%)
Other*	2 (14%)

*Other:

- I attended a meeting on understanding County contracts
- I don't recall formally participating but I did form opinions about these as I read about them perhaps in the media

Prompt Provided:

Introduction:

The County of San Diego has been gathering input to improve its procurement and contracting policies with the goal of reducing barriers, promoting sustainability, and increasing equity and access—especially for local small businesses and nonprofits.

Based on feedback collected through surveys, stakeholder meetings, and webinars, the County has drafted a set of proposed policy changes. We are now seeking your input on how well these proposed changes reflect the feedback you and other stakeholders previously shared. This survey will close on May 15, 2025.

Proposed Policy Changes:

Simplifying Procurement Processes

1. **Proposed Change-** Simplified Process Up to \$500K

The award limit for using a **simpler, faster procurement** process (like Request for Quote (RFQ)) would **increase** from \$100,000 to **\$500,000** per year.

What This Would Mean:

More contracts are anticipated to be awarded through the RFQ process, which is typically quicker, more straightforward, and less costly for businesses and nonprofits to participate in. This reduces the time and resources needed to compete for County contracts, especially when compared to more formal processes like Requests for Bids (RFB) or Requests for Proposals (RFP). Overall, this change makes it easier for businesses to work with the County, especially small businesses and small nonprofits.

2. **Proposed Change:** Simplified Process Up to \$1M for Small Local Business/Nonprofits

When contracts are reserved for **small local businesses**, the County would be able to use a **simpler procurement** process (RFQ) for **awards up to \$1 million per year**.

What This Would Mean:

By increasing this limit from the previous limit of \$100,000, we're creating even more opportunities for small local businesses (including veteran-owned businesses and non-profits) by reducing paperwork and speeding things up. This helps grow our local economy and supports businesses right here in our community.

Small Business Preference Program

3. **Proposed Change:** Small Local Business Preference Increase to 15%

Increasing the **small-local business preference** from **5% to 15%**, and raising the cap from \$50,000 to \$150,000.

What This Would Mean:

Local small businesses and nonprofits would get a bigger competitive boost when bidding for

County work. Their price will be evaluated as if they were up to 15% cheaper, helping them better compete with larger companies.

4. **Proposed Change:** 3% Small Local Subcontracting on Large Contracts

Large contracts (over \$1 million per year) for services, professional services, and public works would require or encourage at least **3% of the work to go to small local businesses (including veteran owned and non-profits).**

What This Would Mean:

Larger public works and services contracts would have requirements to include or encourage the use of small local businesses (including veteran owned and non-profits) as subcontractors—ensuring that more County dollars remain in the local economy.

Veteran-Owned & Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Program

5. **Proposed Change:** Veteran Owned Businesses Count as Small Businesses

Expanding the **definition** of a small business to **include veteran-owned and disabled veteran-owned businesses.**

What This Would Mean:

Veteran-owned businesses would now qualify for the same programs and benefits as other local small businesses and nonprofits. That includes access to simplified procurement opportunities for contracts up to \$1 million per year. This change helps open more doors for veteran-owned businesses and recognizes their role in strengthening our local economy.

6. **Proposed Change:** Higher Amount for Direct Awards to Disabled Veteran Business

Increasing the amount the County can **spend directly** with disabled veteran businesses—**from \$50,000 to \$75,000**—without needing a full competitive process.

What This Would Mean:

It would be easier for disabled veteran businesses to work with the County, helping honor their service while growing their presence in our local economy.

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

7. **Proposed Change:** Greener Product and Vendor Choices

Adding **clearer guidance** on how to choose environmentally responsible products and vendors. This includes using items that are **reusable** or **refurbished**, **avoiding harmful chemicals**, and selecting products that **save energy and last longer.**

What This Would Mean:

We're making greener choices when buying goods—without limiting competition or driving up costs. It's a smarter, more sustainable way to spend public funds.

3. How well do these changes reflect any feedback you may have provided?

1. Simplified Process Up to \$500K

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Does not reflect any of my feedback	0 (0%)
Does not reflect most of my feedback	0 (0%)
Neutral	4 (44%)
Reflects some of my feedback	0 (0)
Reflects most or all my feedback	3 (33%)
N/A	2 (22%)

2. Simplified Process Up to \$1M for Small Local Business/Nonprofits

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Does not reflect any of my feedback	0 (0%)
Does not reflect most of my feedback	0 (0%)
Neutral	3 (33%)
Reflects some of my feedback	1 (11%)
Reflects most or all my feedback	3 (33%)
N/A	2 (22%)

3. Small Local Business Preference Increase to 15%

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Does not reflect any of my feedback	1 (11%)
Does not reflect most of my feedback	0 (0%)
Neutral	1 (11%)
Reflects some of my feedback	1 (11%)
Reflects most or all my feedback	3 (33%)
N/A	3 (33%)

4. 3% Small Local Subcontracting on Large Contracts

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Does not reflect any of my feedback	0 (0%)
Does not reflect most of my feedback	2 (22%)
Neutral	1 (11%)
Reflects some of my feedback	0 (0%)
Reflects most or all my feedback	3 (33%)
N/A	3 (33%)

5. Veteran Owned Businesses Count as Small Businesses

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Does not reflect any of my feedback	1 (11%)
Does not reflect most of my feedback	2 (22%)
Neutral	2 (22%)
Reflects some of my feedback	0 (0%)
Reflects most or all my feedback	1 (11%)
N/A	3 (33%)

6. Higher Amount for Direct Awards to Disabled Veteran Business

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Does not reflect any of my feedback	1 (11%)
Does not reflect most of my feedback	2 (22%)
Neutral	2 (22%)
Reflects some of my feedback	0 (0%)
Reflects most or all my feedback	1 (11%)
N/A	3 (33%)

7. Greener Product and Vendor Choices

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Does not reflect any of my feedback	0 (0%)
Does not reflect most of my feedback	1 (11%)
Neutral	2 (22%)
Reflects some of my feedback	1 (11%)
Reflects most or all my feedback	2 (22%)
N/A	3 (33%)

4. **Are there any additional policy changes you were hoping to see that aren't included in the proposals above?**

- For nonprofit budgets 500k or less be considered for upfront payments to get services started
- Expanding the amounts are great, but how is the County reaching out to BIPOC businesses that can qualify for future bids?
- Simplified access to business support services with streamlined data and resources from service providers showing their success rate providing support to help small businesses prepare for awards.
- The insurance requirements and flow down language will continue to be an issue for small nonprofits.
- Consider scaling the insurance requirements proportional to the size of the contract/subcontract and/or letting the contractor/subcontractor state their case as to why the activity is not high-risk.

5. How do you believe these changes may impact your ability to do business with the County? Please specify the policy change you are referring to.

- Having upfront payments would reduce the barrier of potential lines of credit. Unnecessary time spent to request a line of credit, and to create a new platform of trust.
- I believe it will help my small business stay competitive with larger companies with more resources
- I think it's great that doors are opening for all diverse businesses. Giving nonprofits and veteran owned businesses priorities are great for the local businesses.
- Proposed changes 1,2,3 will increase opportunities for local micro, small and medium sized businesses which will help with economic prosperity locally.
- If the insurance is too expensive depending on the size of the organization, it may impede the ability to move forward in a meaningful way with these ideas. if the flow down language is too onerous, it may still impede forward movement.
- We are a non-profit but not a small one. Giving small businesses and small nonprofits a 15% pricing advantage over large for-profit businesses may make sense, but that same logic does not apply to giving them and advantage over nonprofits, regardless of size. Nonprofits already operate extremely lean, regardless of size. A large nonprofit will be at an extreme disadvantage if our pricing is deemed 15% higher, even though we grew to be a large nonprofit because we run efficient and effective programs and are actually more stable and in a better position to successfully administer the project.
- I feel like I'll actually be able to bid on County contracts.

County staff have analyzed the responses to question 4 above to identify areas where policies need adaptation. The request for progress payments has been integrated into the proposed changes to the policies. Additionally, the other comments have provided invaluable feedback that will be instrumental in enhancing our programs and practices. For instance, the County will continue to explore innovative ways to address insurance-related barriers faced by small organizations. This will involve collaborating with regional partners to identify and implement best practices and creative solutions. Furthermore, while the County already has established partnerships with BIPOC business organizations, it is committed to enhancing its engagement and outreach efforts within this community.

Appendix E- Phase II Virtual Stakeholder Meeting Feedback Data

Meetings:

1. Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies, April 28, 2025

Purpose: To provide an update on the effort to update the County's procurement policies, gather feedback on proposed changes, and discuss the proposed definitions of a small business, nonprofit, and a reciprocal certification program.

2. Small Business Stakeholder Meeting, May 1, 2025

Purpose: To provide an update on the effort to update the County's procurement policies, gather feedback on proposed changes, and discuss the proposed definitions of a small business.

3. Nonprofit Stakeholder Meeting, May 5, 2025

Purpose: To provide an update on the effort to update the County's procurement policies, gather feedback on proposed changes, and discuss the proposed definitions of a nonprofit.

4. Veteran Stakeholder Meeting, May 7, 2025

Purpose: To provide an update on the effort to update the County's procurement policies, gather feedback on proposed changes, and discuss the proposed definitions of a small business and a reciprocal certification program.

5. Progress and Next Steps: Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies, May 15, 2025

Purpose: To share how feedback from the past few weeks has shaped the proposed enhancements to the County's procurement policies and present the County's next steps.

Poll Data:

Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies, April 28, 2025

How have you provided feedback on the County's procurement and contracting practices?

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Survey	15 (18%)
Webinar	7 (8%)
Stakeholder Meeting	12 (14%)
Other	3 (4%)
This is my first time providing feedback	48 (56%)

*10 selected multiple options

Progress and Next Steps: Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies, May 15, 2025

- How have you provided feedback on the County's procurement and contracting practices?

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Survey	4 (30%)
Webinar	2 (15%)
Stakeholder Meeting	2 (15%)
Other	2 (15%)
This is my first time providing feedback	3 (23%)

- How well do these changes reflect any feedback you may have provided?

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Does not reflect any of my feedback	0 (0%)
Does not reflect most of my feedback	0 (0%)
Neutral	2 (18%)
Reflects some of my feedback	3 (27%)
Reflects most or all of my feedback	4 (36%)
I did not provide feedback	2 (18%)

- How do you feel these changes will impact your organizations, or the organizations you support, ability to do business with the County?

Response Options	Responses N (%)
Very Negative Impact	0 (0%)
Negative Impact	0 (0%)
Neutral	6 (55%)
Positive Impact	4 (36%)
Very Positive Impact	1 (9%)

All Virtual Stakeholder Meeting Feedback Summary:

Small Business Definition	
Feedback Summary	Recommendation to Consider
<p>Eligibility & Certification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants raised issues regarding the lengthy certification process • Strong support for a core list of recognized certifications and clear guidance on documentation. • Many requests for self-certification options though a few expressed concerns about some businesses self-identify as small without verification • Some requests for flexibility for businesses partially owned out-of-state. • Suggestions to define size of veteran owned businesses as some may be large. • Consider providing benefits to a veteran-led nonprofit, as it does not qualify as a veteran-owned business. <p>Access & Equity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for DVBE and VOB inclusion, with emphasis on outreach and accurate lists of local veteran-owned businesses. • Feedback confirms the 15% preference level is motivating increased interest in County contracts. <p>Clarity & Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for more education and technical assistance for vendors on small and diverse business programs. <p>Process and Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support expressed for collaborative bidding models (e.g., MSAs pairing primes with smaller orgs). • Support expressed for tracking and accountability for Primes. 	<p>Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List accepted certifications (e.g., State SB/DVBE, SBA 8a) and provide clear guidance. [<i>Reciprocal Certification Recognition</i>] • Allow a hybrid approach to self-certification with post-award verification to reduce burden while maintaining integrity. • Include DVBE and VOBs in the official definition and align with state standards. <p>Implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer education & support for certifications through workshops and technical assistance. • Clarify out-of-state ownership rules and prioritize local economic impact. • Encourage joint bids and prequalification via Master Service Agreements. • Track and enforce actual revenue flow to SBs/DVBEs. • Develop metrics for tracking and accountability.

Nonprofit Definition	
Feedback Summary	Recommendation to Consider
<p>Eligibility & Certification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many stakeholders feel the term “small nonprofit” is unclear or unhelpful—suggest removing “small” and instead focusing on revenue, staffing, and impact metrics. Requests for clarification on size limits. <p>Process & Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonprofits highlight unique challenges like limited staff, grant-based operations, and inflexible insurance requirements. Urged the County to allow scaled contract terms, flexible service delivery, and adjustments for volunteer-run organizations. <p>Access & Equity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple calls for separate evaluation pathways or budgets for nonprofits and small businesses to avoid inequitable competition. 	<p>Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove “small nonprofit” language; define eligibility using clear metrics like revenue, staff size, and mission. Clarify size limits (e.g., budget or staffing thresholds) and allow flexibility for emerging or volunteer-run organizations. <p>Implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scale requirements (e.g., insurance, reporting) based on contract size and nonprofit capacity. Create separate pathways (e.g., set-asides or scoring rubrics) for nonprofits to compete fairly. Distinguish nonprofits from small businesses in eligibility and evaluation to avoid inequitable competition. Offer education & support for nonprofits through workshops and technical assistance.

Reciprocal Certification Program	
Feedback Summary	Recommendation to Consider
<p>Eligibility & Certification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad support for recognizing certifications from other public agencies (e.g., SBA, State SB, WOSB, 8a), especially if they meet core County standards. Requests for clarity on which certifications will be accepted, and how to prove eligibility if certified by another jurisdiction. <p>Process & Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasized certification should be a first filter, followed by performance-based evaluation at the RFP stage. Concerns raised about certification renewal periods—recommend multi-year renewals to reduce administrative burden. 	<p>Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accept certifications from trusted agencies including but not limited to Federal Small Business Administration (SBA) Certifications, i.e. Women-Owned Small Business, 8 (a) Business Development, etc. Clarify accepted certifications and how businesses can prove eligibility from other jurisdictions. <p>Implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use certification as an entry point, with performance and qualifications evaluated during RFP review. Consider offering multi-year certification recognition to reduce the administrative burden for businesses.

Demographics

1. Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies, April 28, 2025

a. Total RSVPs: 184

b. Total Attended*: 111

**May include County representatives or duplicates*

Sectors Represented by Business/Organizations RSVP

(Multiple sectors may have been selected per business/organization)

Category (may select more than one)	Responses N (%)
Non-profit	68 (20%)
Health/Social Services	46 (13%)
Business Support	32 (9%)
Professional Services/Financial Services	30 (9%)
Government	25 (7%)
Architecture/Engineering	22 (6%)
Construction	22 (6%)
Information Technology/Telecommunications	21 (6%)
Manufacturing	12 (4%)
Vehicles and Transportation	11 (3%)
Facility Maintenance Services	9 (3%)
Security/Safety	7 (2%)
Food Services	5 (1%)
Other*	31 (9%)

*Other: A/V Event Production Services; Business Support; Commercial Cleaning; Construction Equipment Dealer; Consulting; Emergency Clothing; Emergency Portable AC Rentals; Entertainment And Education; Generator Planned Maintenance; Interpretation And Translation Services; LACE Technology & Distribution Partner; Liquid Waste Hauling; Marketing; Movies In The Park; Moving Services; Post Construction Cleaning; Relocation And Storage; Retails, Promotional Products; Sober Living; Software; Structural Engineering; Team Development & Leadership / Strategic Participative Planning; Visa Reward Cards Rebates And Incentives; Wholesale Supplies; Youth STEM Enrichment Program

2. Small Business Stakeholder Meeting, May 1, 2025

- a. Total RSVPs: 47
- b. Total Attended: 5

Sectors Represented by Business/Organizations RSVP
(Multiple sectors may have been selected per business/organization)

Category (may select more than one)	Responses N (%)
Business Support	15 (19%)
Professional Services/Financial Services	12 (15%)
Health/Social Services	7 (9%)
Non-profit	7 (9%)
Government	6 (8%)
Information Technology/Telecommunications	5 (6%)
Architecture/Engineering	4 (5%)
Vehicles and Transportation	4 (5%)
Construction	3 (4%)
Manufacturing	3 (4%)
Facility Maintenance Services	2 (3%)
Food Services	2 (3%)
Security/Safety	1 (1%)
Other*	7 (9%)

*Other: Aircraft Washing; Entertainment Education; Mobile Washing / Corrosion Control Services; Recruiting; Retail; Special Inspection And Material Testing; Wholesale Supplies.

3. Nonprofit Stakeholder Meeting, May 5, 2025

- a. Total RSVPs: 97
- b. Total Attended: 23

Sectors Represented by Business/Organizations RSVP
(Multiple sectors may have been selected per business/organization)

Category (may select more than one)	Responses N (%)
Non-profit	93 (56%)
Health/Social Services	34 (20%)
Business Support	9 (5%)
Professional Services/Financial Services	8 (5%)
Food Services	6 (4%)
Government	6 (4%)
Information Technology/Telecommunications	3 (2%)
Construction	1 (1%)
Other*	7 (4%)

*Other: Arts & Culture; Film And Photography; Housing, And Outreach; Music; Performance Arts; Therapy

4. Veteran Stakeholder Meeting, May 7, 2025

- a. Total RSVPs: 21
- b. Total Attended: 5

Sectors Represented by Business/Organizations RSVP

(Multiple sectors may have been selected per business/organization)

Category (may select more than one)	Responses N (%)
Government	8 (16%)
Architecture/Engineering	5 (10%)
Business Support	5 (10%)
Construction	5 (10%)
Information Technology/Telecommunications	5 (10%)
Manufacturing	4 (8%)
Professional Services/Financial Services	4 (8%)
Facility Maintenance Services	3 (6%)
Food Services	2 (4%)
Non-profit	2 (4%)
Vehicles and Transportation	2 (4%)
Health/Social Services	1 (2%)
Other *	4 (8%)

*Other: Evaluation & Assessment; Film And Photography; Management Consulting; Wholesale Supplies

5. Progress and Next Steps: Enhancing the County of San Diego Procurement Policies, May 15, 2025

- a. Total RSVPs: 73
- b. Total Attended: 32

Sectors Represented by Business/Organizations RSVP

(Multiple sectors may have been selected per business/organization)

Category (may select more than one)	Responses N (%)
Non-profit	32 (24%)
Health/Social Services	21 (16%)
Business Support	15 (11%)
Professional Services/Financial Services	13 (10%)
Government	8 (6%)
Architecture/Engineering	7 (5%)
Vehicles and Transportation	6 (4%)
Construction	5 (4%)
Information Technology/Telecommunications	5 (4%)
Facility Maintenance Services	4 (3%)
Manufacturing	4 (3%)
Food Services	1 (1%)
Security/Safety	1 (1%)
Other*	13 (10%)

*Other: Audio Visual Support; Education; Education/Supporting Youth; Entertainment And Education; Interpretation And Translation Services; Moving And Relocation Services; Moving Services; Parts/Tires; Project Management; Small Business; Staffing; Utilities; Veteran & Family

Appendix F- Phase II- Key Stakeholder Feedback Summary

During Phase II, key stakeholders were identified to provide additional input through discussions with County staff.

Key Stakeholder Discussions- Small Business Definition

Discussions primarily focused on the expansion of definition of small businesses were led by the EDGA. Of the 17 of organizations outreached, 12 engaged in discussions with approximately 13 participants. Some discussions continue over multiple meetings.

Organizations

1. Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
2. The Nonprofit Institute-USD
3. Executive Office of the California State Treasurer
4. Prebys Foundation
5. San Diego Workforce Partnership
6. SBCS
7. YMCA San Diego
8. Asian Business Association of San Diego
9. SAY San Diego
10. County of San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce
11. Supplier Diversity Council
12. Capital Impact Partners and CDC Small Business Finance

Summary of Feedback:

General Feedback

- All stakeholders expressed overall support for the effort to enhance procurement policies and practices, expand the small business definition and include nonprofits.
- Many stakeholders wanted to continue to be engaged in discussions and explore how to align efforts with their organizations.

Specific Feedback

- Suggests nonprofits be defined as a 501(c)(3) with paid employees, to ensure that nonprofit organizations have capacity to do the contracted work.
- Recommended to expand outreach to rural areas.
- Cautioned about capacity of Nonprofits may be more limited than small businesses.
- Would like County to explore how to encourage and incentivize primes to so more for subcontractors such as covering insurance.
- Would like to see County department heads or subject matter experts involved in contract negotiations, not just Department of Purchasing and Contracting.
- Cautioned about the potential for larger companies or nonprofits owning small businesses and using the small business to bid on County contracts."
- Expressed support for the programs EDGA is administering for small businesses such as BUILD/CORE.

Additionally, DPC held one discussion with approximately 14 members of Community Action Partnership Advisory Board to discuss the high-level policy updates. In the discussion, a recommendation to reach out to the City of San Diego's small business team to utilize their outreach list was shared. It was also recommended that the County do more focused outreach to the rural areas, like Julian.

Note: See Appendix G for a summary discussion primarily focused on environmentally preferred procurement.

Appendix G – Summary of Environmentally Preferable Procurement (EPP) Outreach and Engagement

Across Phase I and II, the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ) held/participated in 57 engagement and outreach activities that informed the update to Board Policy B-67.

PHASE I: 36 engagement/outreach activities

13 Internal County Stakeholder Meetings

- Held thirteen discussions with internal County departments that involved sharing updates on the process of updating EPP, hearing from departments on their priorities, and providing presentations on the approach and thematic areas that guided the update to EPP.

11 Key Stakeholder Discussions

- Held four meetings with current County vendors (Staples, Grainger, and Steelcase) to discuss specific products categories as it relates to their catalog of products available to the County. All discussions and feedback were positive, and vendors expressed alignment with the draft policy and their available products.
- Met with two certification bodies (Cradle to Cradle and BIFMA), which provided subject matter expertise in terms of their certifications/labels that includes standards for environmental and human health impacts, material impacts, and social responsibility.
- Held five discussions with representative from local jurisdictions and nonprofits that provided subject matter expertise including the Responsible Purchasing Network, Habitable, Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council, and Cradle to Cradle.

3 Workshops

- In partnership with community-based organization partners, co-hosted Community Climate Conversations across the San Diego region and in all Board Districts to bring community, local agencies, and decision makers together. Attendees included general public, local city staff, and individuals representing organizations and businesses. Two of these in-person workshops (July 9 and 22, 2024 and over 140 attendees) included conversations with community about materials and greener products, such as:
 - The challenge of having to think about how we dispose of things, especially in public places, and the desire to see the government lead and set the standard.
 - Concerns about the lack of available resources.
 - The need to shift cultural values that favor consumerism, as well as the need for fix-it fairs, and ordinances to reduce single-use plastic regionwide.
 - Greenwashing and inconsistent recycling and composting standards.
 - Limited enforcement of plastic ordinances and the need to use schools and college campuses as a starting point for change.
- In partnership with UC San Diego, held a workshop on January 31, 2025 (48 attendees) to envision methods for re-forming our waste streams and efforts toward a circular economy. Attendees included local jurisdictions and regional agencies, community-based organizations, and non-profits. Participants provided feedback on the workshop and general themes included:
 - Desire for regional resources and education
 - Collaboration and thought partners
 - Similar workshops to create awareness and connection
 - Interest and excitement for the development of an updated EPP policy

Other

- Reached more than 120 County staff through email communications that included seeking department priorities for product categories, notification of updating EPP and opportunities to provide feedback, comments, and ideas.
- Attended and hosted an interactive activity at the Zero Waste Symposium on February 26, 2025, at the County Operations Center which had over 200 attendees. This event was organized by the nonprofit Zero Waste San Diego and included sustainability and zero waste advocates, businesses stakeholders, representatives from local jurisdictions, and the general public. Attendees were excited to hear about EPP development and learning more once the policy is implemented.

PHASE II: 21 engagement/outreach activities)

8 Internal County Stakeholder Meetings

- Held three 'open house' meetings for County staff to learn about and review the draft EPP policy.
 - Nearly 130 County staff attended with representatives from each business group and included procurement staff and department/executive leadership. (April 28: 51 attendees, May 2: 47 attendees, May 5: 31 attendees)
 - Received twelve comments around specific guidance in the policy, recommendations for referencing additional County efforts/policy in the alignment section, and sought clarification in the responsibility of departments in the implementation section of the policy.
 - Department staff particularly expressed a desire for trainings and resources and offered ideas based on their learning preferences.
 - These engagement activities resulted in four direct changes/additions to the draft policy.
- Joined five meetings that included County staff from across sustainability, purchasing, and executives to share the draft policy, collect feedback, and address questions.

10 Key Stakeholder Discussions

- Held six meetings with certification bodies (Forest Stewardship Council, GreenScreen Certified, Greenhealth Approved, BIFMA, SCS Global Services, USDA BioPreferred) to walk through the draft policy specific to where their certification was referenced. All certification bodies concurred with how their programs were referenced and provided additional recommendations.
- Held two meetings with current County vendors, Staples and Grainger, which included follow ups from previous conversations and discussed next steps in terms of data availability.
- Held a meeting with the City of Encinitas, which shared that the city is looking to update their policy that was last updated about 20 years ago. This provided an opportunity for County staff to share the approach taken and collect comments toward harmonization.
- Held a meeting with the Responsible Purchasing Network, which is an international nonprofit leader working on model policies, tracking tools, and educational resources, to support adoption and implementation of environmentally preferable products. Comments and feedback included how best to reference certification bodies in the policy and recommendations on resource guides.
- Across all these discussions, received over 80 comments that were in support of the policy, suggestions/recommendations for additions and/or refinements to the policy, and accompanying resources and/or references for future iterations.

Other

- Reached nearly 110 County staff through email communications that included notifications of EPP being updated, questions about product category prioritization, and updates on the effort.
- Coordinated the County's annual Earth Day Fair on April 18, 2025, at the COC, with 21 other departments providing informational and interactive booths, together with 15 community partners. Attended by more than 300 people.
 - Received 130 responses to a question activity (it is estimated that there were 32 unique engagements during which people responded to more than one prompt).
 - A majority of respondents were aware of EPP (60%)
 - A majority of respondents were not aware of the County's reutilization program (60%)
 - A majority of respondents said their department considered sustainability and equity in making purchasing decisions (71%)
 - Opportunities/barriers respondents faced to incorporate sustainability considerations into purchases were: The need for resources (37%); It takes time (22%); Not sure where to start (11%); and Other (30%). Responses for Other included: Not sure who to talk to about specific purchasing asks; and Greenwashing.
- Followed up with nearly 130 County staff through email communications to provide a recap of the open house meetings and the feedback collected and next steps for draft policies.

Appendix H- Organizations Contacted and Engaged

+BOX	BKM OfficeWorks	City of Del Mar
A&G Professional Services LLC	Black Box Safety, Inc.	City of El Cajon
ABSG Consulting Inc.	Black SD	City of Encinitas
Ace Relocation Systems	Black Tech Link	City of Escondido
Activus Transport	Bonita Family Resource Center	City of Imperial Beach
ADCOMM Engineering LLC	Brain XP	City of La Mesa
Adulting Highway: Life Skills Lessons for teens and adults	Burnham Center for Community Advancement	City of Lemon Grove
AFDAN	C&C Glass	City of National City
Air Solutions LLC	C3 Innovations LLC Tech Consulting and Education	City of Oceanside
Alcohol and Drug Service Provider Association Executive Committee	CA Gov Ops	City of Poway
All Contractors registered in BuyNet as of 4.18.2025	Cabinet Secretary to the Governor	City of San Diego
All Occasions Services	CAIR San Diego	City of San Marcos
All Service Moving	Cal Fresh Healthy Living Program	City of Santee
All Service Moving LLC	California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (Go-Biz)	City of Solana Beach
Alliance for African Assistance	California Manufacturing Technology Consulting	City of Vista
Amanda Brown Livewell	Capital Impact Partners and CDC Small Business Finance	Civic Mapping
American Global Security, Inc.	CARE San Diego	Cleantech SD
Amerivet Contracting	Carelon	Clovity Inc.
APEX Accelerator	Casa de Amparo	Coastal Defenders
Apt 4 Music	Casa de Oro Alliance	Colliers
Architects Mosher Drew	Caster Properties	Collins Inspection and Testing
Asian Business Association San Diego	Catalyst San Diego and Imperial Counties	Common Ground
Association of General Contractors	CBRE	Consultancy CA
Athenian Group, LLC	Center for Environmental Health (CEH)	Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP)
AtWork	Center for Progressive Wellness	- Recovery Residence Association
Austin Air Systems, Ltd.	Central SD Black Chamber of Commerce	Community Now
Avison Young	Charles Anthony Consulting Inc	Community Rising Africa Network, Inc
AwnGuard	CHIP-Recovery Residence Association	Connect
Backcountry Communities Thriving	City Heights CDC	Construction Service Workers Contemporary Health Solutions
Balboa Fence Company LLC	City of Carlsbad	Cook + Schmid
BAPACSD	City of Chula Vista	Council for Supplier Diversity
Bay Vista / Lisbon Village Vista	City of Coronado	County of San Diego Black Chamber of Commerce
Bellator Psychological and Consultants Corporation		County of San Diego Equity Grant Recipients
Best Payment Solutions		Cradle to Cradle
BIFMA		Crane Works SW
		Crest Capital Management
		CSU San Marcos
		Cummins Sales and Service
		Cushman & Wakefield

DAP Health	GiGi's Playhouse San Diego	JHW Rentals
Davy Architecture	Down Syndrome	JIREH Providers
DGX Enterprise AI	Achievement Center	JLL
Diamond Concrete Supply	Gioia's Room Boutique	JNH Construction, Inc
DIN Tested	GLM House Inc	Julian Pathways, Inc.
Don Hinderliter Architect, Inc.	Global Communities	JUST JOC ENTERPRISES
Doors of Change	Global Development	KC Design + Development
DPD Solutions	Innovations, Inc	KEISEN CONSULTING INC
East County Economic	Global Organic Textile	La Maestra Family Clinic, Inc.
Development Council	Standard (GOTS)	Lambda Rising Soccer Club
East County Ready Mix &	Grainger	Learning for All
materials Corp	GREENGUARD	Legal Aid Society of San
Economic Development	Greenhealth Approved	Diego
Administration (EDA)	GreenScreen	Level Up Recovery
EKG & ASSC. WEST, LLC	Greenwise	Residence
Emilio Nares Foundation	Guy F. Atkinson Construction,	LHH Recruitment Solutions
EMMC, inc	LLC	Lids of Encouragement/Army
Empowering Latino Futures	Habitable	of Saints
Empowerment Association	Hard Hands & Big Hearts	Lifeline Community Services
Encanto Southern Baptist	Harmonium	Live Well San Diego
Church	Health Product Declaration	Community Sectors:
Energy Policy Initiatives	Healthy Day Partners	Business Sector and
Center	Henderson Professional	Community, Faith and Rural
ENERGY STAR	Consulting	Sector
Engineering Design	HICAP	Lived Experience Advisors
Consultants, Inc.	Hood Proverbz	Logan Heights CDC
Episcopal Community	Hope the Mission	Loma Media
Services	HydroLynx Systems, Inc	Longfellow Real Estate
ESCOKIDOS	I Love to Glean	MAAC
Executive Office of the	IB Arts	Mano a Mano Foundation
California State Treasurer.	IBEW Local 569	Marcus & Millichap
Exodus Recovery, Inc.	Imani By Faith Production	Marketing Excellence Inc
Fallbrook Family Health	Imperial Valley Economic	Mas Alla
Center	Development Corporation	Master Painters Institute
Family Health Centers of San	Ina Buckner-Barnette, The	(MPI)
Diego	Sunshine Storyteller	Material Dash
Fastenal	Inspire SD	McAlister Institute
Father 2 Child East	Interfaith Community	Meadowlark Engineering LLC
Father2Child	Services	Mended Wing Consulting,
Filipino American Chamber of	International Living Future	LLC
Commerce Greater San	Institute (ILFI), Declare Label	Mid-City Community
Diego	IO Environmental and	Advocacy Network
Filos Consulting	Infrastructure	Millennium Diagnostic
Fleet Science Center	IT Computer Wiz Kids	Imaging Service
Foodshed	Jensen Hughes	Mission Driven Finance
Forest Stewardship Council	Jewish Family Service of San	Modern Septic Service
	Diego	Momentum

Movement Matters Collective	Powerscreen of California,	San Diego County Farm
National Black Contractors	Nevada & Hawaii	Bureau
Association	Prebys Foundation	San Diego County Hispanic
National Sanitation	Printing on 5th Avenue, LLC	Chamber of Commerce
Foundation (NFI)/American	Pro Goodie Promotion	San Diego County Library
National Standards Institute	Promethean One	San Diego Diplomacy Council
(ANSI)	Prowess Utility Group Inc.	San Diego Equality Business
NATIVE Placements	Public Purchasing Exchange,	Association
Natives Nationwide	PPEX	San Diego Food System
Networking Group	Quality Masters	Alliance
NCHEC	R4YM Inc.	San Diego Foundation
Newmark Group	Radinnova	San Diego French American
North County African	Rallypoint Group	Chamber of Commerce
American Women's	Rebuilding Green	San Diego Futures
Association	Recon Chief Inc.	Foundation
North County Economic	Redwood Scientific	San Diego Made
Development Council	Communications LLC	San Diego North Business
North EDC / Innovate 78	Regional Homeless	Chamber
Nostra Group	Assistance Program	San Diego Refugee Tutoring
NOVA Services, Inc.	Responsible Purchasing	San Diego Regional Chamber
OCMI, Inc.	Network	of Commerce
OEKO-TEX	Rick's Independent Living	San Diego Regional Climate
OFFICE FURNITURE	Rise of Dark Dawn	Collaborative
EXPRESS	Root Digger Genealogy	San Diego Regional East
Old Town Chamber of	Research Services	County Chamber of
Commerce	S1 Eleven Security	Commerce
Omni2Max	Sael Construction	San Diego Regional
On My Grind LLC	Corporation	Economic Development
Oncology And Kids	San Diego & Imperial Small	Council
One-By-One Solutions, LLC	Business Development	San Diego Regional Policy &
Open Heart Leaders	Center (SBDC) Network	Innovation Center
Otay Mesa Chamber	San Diego Association of	San Diego Sister Cities
Our Genetic Legacy	Governments	San Diego Tourism Authority
Pacific Coast Commercial	San Diego Black Business	San Diego Urban
Paddle for Peace	Network	Sustainability Coalition
Pan African Family Union	San Diego Center for	San Diego Veterans Coalition
Peace Anger Love	Children	(SDVC)
Peace Anger Love	San Diego Central Chamber	San Diego Workforce
Peer Professionals of	of Commerce	Partnership
California	San Diego Coastal Chamber	San Diego Youth Services
Performant Manufacturing	San Diego College of	San Ysidro Chamber of
PHATCAMP Inc	Continuing Education	Commerce
Philips nonprofit consulting	Foundation	Sapient Logic
Pilipino Workers Center	San Diego Convention Center	SBDC
Policy and Innovation Center	San Diego County Building &	SCS
Port of San Diego	Construction Trades Council	
Poway Chamber		

SD & Imperial Counties	Telecare	Veterans United Solutions,
Community Colleges	Teleclinic LLC	LLC
Regional Consortium	Tetra Tech, Inc.	Viet Voices
SDCCD	The Nonprofit Institute, USD	Village Up
Seamgen	The Prep Institute	Vista Chamber of Commerce
Sennin Security Solutions	The Rep Academy	Vista Hill
Sharia's Closet	The So Company	VOAD CRT
Sherman Heights Community	Tijuana Economic	Voccent
Center	Development Council	Voit
Sign Factory	TPS Group	Walk With Me Impact
Silvergate	TPS Printing	Watering Hope
Slate Group	Trellis-Strategy	WetStone Wine Bar
Slavic Refugee and	Treobytes	Will Construction, LLC
Immigrant Services	True Choice Medical Clinics	Women Construction Owners
Organisation	Turn Behavioral Health	and Executives (WCOE)
SoCal Pre Apprenticeship	Services	Women of Color Roar Media
Program & Care Service	TURN BHS North Inland	World Relief Southern
Workforce Apprenticeship	Substance Use Prevention	California
Program	(NISUP)	Wright General Contracting,
Social Advocates for Youth	TURN BHS/MHS inc	Inc.
(SAY) San Diego	U.S. Department of	YMCA of San Diego County
Solana Center for	Agriculture BioPreferred	Young And Prosperous
Environmental Innovation	UC San Diego	Foundation
SOMALI FAMILY SERVICE	UL Ecologo	
OF SAN DIEGO	Un mar de colores	
SONDEREYES LLC	Union of Pan Asian	
Sonoma Promo	Communities (UPAC)	
South County Economic	United Taxi Workers of San	
Development Council	Diego	
Sports San Diego	United Transportation	
Ssubi Foundation	Workers of San Diego	
Staples	Urban League of San Diego	
Starlight Corporation	County	
STAYING FOCUSED CORP	US Commerce - International	
Steelcase	Trade	
Steren Solutions	US Navy	
Stok, LLC	US Small Business	
Studio ACE	Administration	
Suite Dreams Properties, Inc.	UTWSD	
Sundt Construction	Valdes Language Services	
Supplier Diversity Council	Valor Constructors Inc	
Support The Enlisted Project	Veterans Association of North	
(STEP)	County (VANC)	
Sustainable Industries	Veterans East County	
Sustainable Purchasing	Alliance (VECA)	
Leadership Council	Veterans In Business	
Sweet Dee's Sweets	Network	