Best Practice Award Innovation in the Procurement Process

Project Title
Virtual Vendor Academy

Submitted By
Miami-Dade County
Internal Services Department
Strategic Procurement Division

Core Values: "SERVICE"

Internal Services Department (ISD) provides a wide range of internal support services to ensure optimal operation of Miami-Dade County government.

ISD is customer-focused and committed to serve its customers and the Miami-Dade community in an equitable, transparent, and efficient manner. ISD's core values are grounded in the word **"SERVICE":**

- **S**trategic: Planning for success
- **E**xpertise: Leadership through experience and knowledge
- **R**esponsive: Ready to serve
- **V**isionary: Forward thinking
- **I**ntegrity: Doing the right thing
- **C**ollaborative: Leveraging collective talent
- **E**ffective: Providing quality solutions

As part of the General Government strategic area, ISD supports governmental operations by providing strategic procurement of best value goods and services in a timely manner, countywide vendor services, and small business program management and services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly disrupted the workplace, businesses and the overall economy. Emphasis is being placed on automating services and utilizing new technology to communicate with Vendors

ISD strives to connect with customers and stakeholders to effectively align its services to meet continuously changing needs within a dynamic business environment.

ISD aims to increase participation from small, local, women- and minority-owned businesses, therefore supporting our Mayor's 4Es of **Equity, Engagement, Environment and Economy.**

ISD focuses on entrepreneurial development opportunities within Miami-Dade County,

ISD encourages the creation of new small businesses and expanding opportunities for small businesses to compete for Miami-Dade County contracts.

Project Summary

ISD held quarterly face-to-face classroom-based vendor educational workshops for the business community. prior to March 2020, when the world was impacted by the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

ISD had to explore other alternative ways of training the vendor community

ISD's goal is to increase vendor engagement and participation

This initiative will offer free virtual vendor workshops, monthly virtual vendor forums, an annual procurement exposition, Commission districts virtual vendor workshops, and YouTube videos in three languages (English, Spanish and Creole)

- **ISD** will be focusing on reforming how the County evaluates businesses
- **ISD** will educate local vendors and give them the tools to become a vendor with the County and to respond and be awarded contracts.

Project Summary (Cont'd)

- In August 2020, almost six months after the entire County staff started working remotely due to the pandemic, ISD introduced Phase 1 of the Virtual Vendor Academy.

- Monthly virtual workshops offered in English, during the morning and evening to accommodate businesses and their staff.

- The intent is to bring the message to ALL vendors in a way where they will be comfortable receiving the message from the comfort of their office or home, keeping the ability for them to ask questions.

- To date, we have held over 60 virtual workshops.

Phase 1:
Virtual Workshops Launched

Modules covered Goods and Services, Architectural & Engineering and Design-Build

- How to:
  - Register as a County Vendor
  - Access and download free solicitations
  - Respond to Goods and Services and A&E Solicitations
  - Become a County Certified Business
  - Obtain prequalification and technical Certifications
- What goods does the County purchase via Request for Proposal'/Invitation for Bid
- What happens after an RFP/Bid is awarded
- Governing Legislation pertaining to procurement i.e., Living Wage, Local Preference and Veteran's Preference, Florida Statute 287.055, Conflict of Interest, Cone of Silence, Public Records Requests, Sunshine Law and many others
- Performance Bonds/Bid Bonds/Insurance Requirements

Phase 2:
Next Steps

Phase 2 of the initiative is to develop eight virtual Vendor Education Workshop Series through YouTube, in English, Spanish and Creole.

This phase is anticipated to be completed by the end of the Fiscal Year 2021-2022; September 30, 2022.

Phase 2:
Next Steps

Part 1 (launched by April 30, 2022)
All Sessions in English
1. How to register with Miami-Dade County as a Vendor
2. How to register with BidSync and INFORMS
3. On-Line Portal to access and download free solicitations

Part 2 (launched by July 31, 2022)
All sessions in Spanish and Creole
1. How to register with Miami-Dade County as a Vendor
2. How to register with BidSync and INFORMS
3. On-Line Portal to access and download free solicitations
4. Understanding County Solicitations – Methods of Procurement

Phase 2:
Next Steps

Part 3: (launched by September 30, 2022) and will be in English
1. How to become certified as part of the County's Certification Pro
2. grams The major sections of a solicitation
3. Responding to County Solicitations – RFP, RFQ, IFB, A&E, Design-Build
4. County Award Process Overview for RFP, RFQ and ITB)

Phase 3 of the initiative is to complete the four YouTube videos below in **Spanish and Creole**. This phase is anticipated to be completed by the end of April 2023.

Phase 3:
Next Steps

Phase 3 of the initiative is to complete the four YouTube videos below in **Spanish and Creole.** This phase is anticipated to be completed by the end of April 2023.

Part 1: (launched by April 30, 2023)

1. How to become certified through County's Certification Programs

2. The major sections of a solicitation

3. Responding to County Solicitations–RFP/RFQ/IFB/A&E/DB

4. County Award Process Overview for RFP, RFQ and ITB

Virtual Vendor Academy: Effectiveness

The Virtual Vendor Academy represents a new or different creative approach to delivering the needed training and information that is needed by the small and specifically startup local businesses

Prior to March 2020, all vendor workshops were in person, and held quarterly at the County downtown Miami location

- Vendors had to take time off from the office and their busy schedules to drive, park (pay), then walk to the location.
- Significantly reduced the burden on vendors to visit County offices to attend the face-to-face workshops.
- Attendance at the in-person workshops interrupts the small business owner who may also be the only employee.
- Virtual sessions has reduced commonly asked questions that small businesses usually have for procurement staff
- Added flexibility that a virtual environment provides allows the small business owners and the actual facilitators of the workshops to experiment with what suits their learning needs best

Virtual Vendor Academy: Effectiveness

These virtual workshops and YouTube videos will be beneficial to the business owners:
- Provide remote access to the information
- Conveniently repeat the information at any time and allow their employees to do the same.

The cost savings to the County:
- Alleviating valuable staff time
- Reducing printing, storing, and reporting costs
- Reduced the use of paper used to print information to hand out at the in-person workshops.

Benefits for vendors:
- Time savings from not having to visit County offices
- Financially as they save on fuel and parking costs.
- Ability to access a wealth of information using the YouTube videos without having to rely on County staff.

Virtual Vendor Academy: Benefits

The County has achieved its objective of making the process user-friendly and convenient for vendors by:

- Eliminating postage costs
- Having accessibility to the YouTube videos
- Elimination of paper use (going-green)
- Improved the County's overall efficiency by improving record keeping and reporting as attendance can be automatically printed by the host of the Zoom sessions
- Allowing Procurement staff to focus on other important responsibilities.

Success

The success of the initiative will be dependent on proper marketing to inform vendors that the information is available.

Making the vendor workshops and training available virtually will reach countless numbers of businesses and potential business owners.