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Matchmaking for businesses: Creating connections



Shelli
McMillen Soto
University
of Hartford

"At Viking Construction, we are always looking for qualified subcontractors. We need to find the right company for the job in order to create a successful project, so relationships are very important to us. We know we'll meet the quality we are seeking at the CT Business Matchmaker." Michele Yeager, project administrator, Viking Construction Inc.

Working with the right businesses as partners is a key to the success of every company. But finding the right businesses to work with is not always an easy task. The Entrepreneurial Center of the University of Hartford has created the CT Business Matchmaker, an annual event since 2010, that offers an invaluable opportunity for small to large companies and organizations committed to expanding their contracting opportunities. At the event, small businesses meet with Primes (including large and medium-sized companies, municipalities, government agencies, and educational institutions) to present their products and services in a series of 10 minute

one-on-one interviews.

Three past Prime attendees shared their experiences in participating in the event and identified how it has benefitted their companies: Michele Yeager, Viking Construction Inc.; Michael Jefferson, supplier diversity manager, The Metropolitan District (MDC); and Robert Tripi, manager of special projects division, Morganti.

Giving opportunities to local, small businesses is a driving priority for Jefferson at the MDC. "Through the CT Business Matchmaker, we accomplished our goal of reaching out to new subcontractors and providing economic opportunities to local, small businesses." He appreciates the presence of resource partners in the Matchmaker event. "They help get the small businesses ready for the opportunities we put out to bid. I like to network with those agencies as well so I know what resources are available to support the success of our vendors. The MDC is committed to this process that helps build opportunities for small businesses."

Tripi likes to learn what's new in the marketplace, including products and services he may not have realized were available, yet are beneficial to Morganti. His primary interest is in meeting new subcontractors. He re-

membered one particularly successful connection. "At the 2012 Matchmaker, I met a small carpentry firm, Steers Construction, who won a subsequent bid from Morganti to create a series of clowns and other carpentry items for a circus-themed room in a library project. It was a really fun project and Steers Construction is a great company that we would not have met without the aid of the Matchmaker."

Clients of the Entrepreneurial Center, owners Jeanne and Chris Steers were so satisfied with the introductory process provided by the event, and the support they received from Morganti in order to complete the project, they wrote to Governor Malloy, "The [CT Business] Matchmaker and the support we have received from Morganti has been instrumental in helping us get our sea legs. We left the Matchmaker feeling empowered."

The 2017 event will be on June 1 from 7 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at the University of Hartford, 200 Bloomfield Ave., West Hartford.

For full story visit nerej.com

Shelli McMillen Soto is marketing & technical assistance program manager for the Entrepreneurial Center at the University of Hartford, Conn.



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