



News release

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Gallegos presents ins and outs of City of Houston business certification

BAY AREA HOUSTON, TEXAS – “I love what I do,” exclaimed Robert Gallegos to the members and guests of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership’s Small Business Committee during a meeting held March 25 in BAHEP’s conference room. Gallegos is assistant director of the Affirmative Action and Contract Compliance Division for the City of Houston. He spoke to the group about the city’s Minority, Women, Disadvantaged, and Small Business Enterprise Program (MWDBE/SBE) and the process of becoming certified. City of Houston certification for these businesses can potentially open many doors to those owners who are willing to learn the system of city contracting and who successfully market themselves. Gallegos added, “In order to be successful, you have to network with people. You have to attend networking events that give you a good return on your dollar.”

Currently, over 1,400 companies are certified and listed in the city’s MWDBE/SBE Directory, which is updated monthly. They can bid on city contracts and have access to workshops, seminars and a quarterly newsletter, *The Source*. Companies must meet certain requirements to qualify for certification, though. For example, the minority or female owner must possess at least 51% ownership, management, and control of the business. The minority or female owner must also have the training/expertise to perform the work, and where required and have a license or certificate issued in his or her name. Gallegos noted that he is working on a project to include veterans in the program as well. He served in the United States Air Force for 20 years, and it is a project that is near and dear to his heart.

Certification process averages 33 days

Gallegos stated that the certification process is easy “if and when” a complete application packet is submitted. Certification can take as few as 12 days if everything is in order. It can also take upwards of 90 days if companies don’t initially provide all the required documentation. The average wait for certification is 33 days.

Every applicant must take a free, precertification workshop either on-line or in person at 611 Walker St. in Houston where it is presented every Thursday, except on holidays, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:20 p.m. on the 7th floor of the building. No appointment is necessary. The MWDBE Precertification Workshop is

accessible online in English, Spanish and Vietnamese at www.houstontx.gov under the Affirmative Action and Contract Compliance Department.

Bob Mitchell, BAHEP president, said, “Getting certified with the City of Houston creates so many opportunities for MWDBE businesses. Several of BAHEP’s small business members have expressed an interest in attending a precertification workshop. We’ll be working with Mr. Gallegos to facilitate a workshop here in Bay Area Houston.”

City of Houston certification reaches far and wide

City of Houston certification, which is available at no cost, is also accepted by numerous other companies and organizations to include: Brown & Root, the Houston Independent School District, the Houston Housing Authority, the Port of Houston, Texas Southern University’s Economic Development Center, the Houston Community College System, the Texas Building and Procurement Commission, and the Environmental Protection Agency. A non-reciprocal Common Certification Agreement also exists with the Houston Minority Business Council, the Houston Women’s Business Enterprise Alliance, the Texas Unified Certification Program, and the State of Texas Historically Underutilized Businesses Program. Translation – get certified with the City of Houston first, and acceptance from all of the above entities is automatic.

GPC Connections event coming in April

Gallegos also spoke about the GPC, Government Procurement Connections, trade show that will be held at the George R. Brown Convention Center April 22-23, 2009. It is the “premier government contracting event of the year for small, minority, women-owned and disadvantaged businesses.” Business owners do not have to be certified to attend. The conference provides the opportunity for government agencies, corporations and small businesses to discuss potential business relationships. Gallegos said that he would be attending and encouraged the group to do so as well.

Bob Payne, program manager for BAHEP’s Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program, told the group that GPC offers a lot of good information for small business owners as well as unique networking opportunities. SATOP has hosted a booth at GPC for the past six years. More information can be found at www.houstongpc.org.

Near the end of his presentation, Gallegos stated, “If you want help, call 911. If you want opportunity, call me.” He gave the group the numbers for his direct line, his cell phone and his home number, too. That’s a man who definitely loves his job.

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Mark Conrad (seated at head of table), chairman of Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership's Small Business Committee, prepares to introduce Robert Gallegos to the attendees. Gallegos is assistant director of the Affirmative Action and Contract Compliance Division for the City of Houston. He spoke to the group on March 25 about the city's Minority, Women, Disadvantaged, and Small Business Enterprise Program (MWDBE/SBE).



Robert Gallegos

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Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment in southeast Texas. Its members include more than 260 investor companies, business professionals, local governments, and educational institutions encompassing 13 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, and the Port of Houston Authority. Visit www.bayareahouston.com.

Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program is administered by the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. It is a State of Texas funded initiative designed to transfer the knowledge and technology of the U.S. Space Program to small businesses to solve technical challenges they are unable to solve themselves. Visit www.spacetechnolutions.com/bahep.