

# Development team expands business outreach efforts

*Members of DMB's new Business Development Unit talked about their efforts to expand contracting opportunities among Michigan businesses. Kassie Kretzschmar, DMB's communications director, talked with Genevieve Hayes, Business Development Unit manager; Tammi Hart, Supplier Diversity Program coordinator; and Rebecca Nevai, Buy Michigan First program coordinator.*

*Q: The three of you make up the new Business Development Unit. What is the focus of this team?*

**Hayes:** We have specific goals we're trying to reach in terms of the percentage of Michigan businesses that are awarded our contracts and payments made to diverse or underrepresented groups and small businesses. We work closely with Doug Spade and Mike Clement, our supplier diversity colleagues who meet with veterans' groups, because they have their own set of goals as far as payments to vendors with disabilities and service-disabled veterans.

So we have a business plan, and we're working to meet those numbers. We are working on marketing initiatives and education initiatives, and we're increasing our outreach to chambers of commerce. We're trying to reach out to new groups – new chambers of commerce that we haven't encountered in the past, trade associations, Rotary Clubs, and business incubators – that's a new one we're working on.

We're also working on new ways to reach out, in terms of the geography of the state. It's a pretty big state. We're looking into video conferencing and have a video conference scheduled for August.

**Nevai:** That will be our first training via video conference with Smartboard capabilities so participants can see the PowerPoint presentation with the speaker in front of it as opposed to seeing a

Word document with a voiceover. We're borrowing another agency's technology so we don't have to physically travel. This will enable us to cover the Upper Peninsula better than we did before.



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*– Genevieve Hayes*

**Hayes:** We also do a lot of work with legislators and hold events for them so that we can educate their constituents. We put a lot of effort into partnering with various governmental agencies and minority groups in the area. Rebecca does a lot of work with the Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, and we had a joint event with the Small Business and Technology Development Center and federal procurement defense agencies.

*Q: Where does the Buy Michigan First program go from here?*

**Hayes:** Well, we're trying to take it to the next level. We're really trying to drill down and reach vendors – even, in some cases, on a one-on-one basis. We work with our Bid for Michigan system, look at the vendor registrations, and try to pull data from it so we can target contract areas that, maybe, haven't had a lot of Michigan participation or participation from underrepresented groups.

Judy Thelen, a department analyst with the Business Development Unit, tracks this vendor information. She helps us identify payments to underrepresented groups and the Michigan businesses that hold State contracts.

**Hart:** We're also in the process of developing supplier diversity training for buyers and supplier diversity champions. That's only going to help the program – Buy Michigan First, as well as the supplier diversity piece of it – because that's going to educate the buyers on supplier diversity, our initiatives, and the different tools and techniques they can use daily.



*Q: Rebecca, you have been a DMB buyer for four years. Why did you choose to pursue an outreach position?*

**Nevai:** I wanted to diversify my work experience. I think my experience in purchasing on the commodities team and the services team – so two of our three teams – really helps me as I go on the road to help educate vendors on the system. When questions come up during presentations, I've found it very helpful to have that background, and I think it's been helpful for the team to have someone from inside the purchasing operations office. It is a privilege to teach vendors on the process and encourage them to get into it for the first time.

*Q: What makes you proud about your efforts?*

**Hayes:** I think it's most gratifying to receive a compliment from a business person – either indirectly or directly – who has appreciated the information that was passed on. Basically, you do want to get down to a one-on-one level, and it's gratifying when you hear that the information they received was valuable to them and that they feel better about being able to go and research opportunities and actually bid and, hopefully, get awards.

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*– Rebecca Nevai*



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*– Tammi Hart*

**Hart:** I would agree. The e-mails that just say thank you and we appreciate the help, are really gratifying. They may say they didn't know this program existed or that the State actually hired someone to do this type of thing. So it is gratifying, the appreciation of just hearing thank you and I like knowing you're there when I need you.

**Nevai:** I take pleasure, definitely, in the e-mails where somebody says thank you, I'm glad I have this information. They're encouraged to do research and to bid, which is really positive. Also, lately, we get thanks from some of our event partners, like a trade association or a chamber that says thank you for bringing that information in, and we're glad we have this for our members.

**Hart:** I'm just going to speak for the group. I think we work very well together. We complement one another. I just think we work well as a team, and we get the job done effectively.