

Chicago Area Minority Businesses “Road Trip” to Federal Military Facilities

MBDA’s Chicago Minority Business Opportunity Center (Chicago MBOC) recently arranged a series of “road trips” to federal military facilities in Illinois for its clients. These facilities were Scott Air Force Base (located 20 miles east of St. Louis, MO); Rock Island Arsenal (Rock Island, IL 180 miles west of Chicago); and Great Lakes Naval Station (Great Lakes, IL). Each of these facilities are host to military and civilian “commands and headquarters”, responsible for purchasing billions of dollars in products and services for the US military and civilian agencies. The Rock Island Arsenal, alone, purchases more than \$25 billion in goods and services, annually.

The purpose of these trips was to create opportunities for face-to-face meetings between MBOC clients and small business advocates and contracting officials at these facilities. During these meetings, MBOC clients were able to learn about the items (or services) each command or contracting office procures and of current and upcoming contracting opportunities. MBOC clients also had an opportunity to make capabilities presentations to facility procurement and small business program staff.

Clients were invited based on the needs of the various commands at Scott AFB. In this case, clients providing services in IT/IS, architecture/engineering, training, office furniture, electronics recycling and construction.

Members of the Illinois Air National Guard talked about current and upcoming bid opportunities. They had an immediate need for office furniture and electronics recycling which two minority businesses



were able to provide. Other clients were given valuable information about how best to position themselves to be successful in gaining business with the government. Overall, minority businesses that participated were able to make successful strategic connections for business opportunities.

The second “road trip” included representatives of Rock Island’s small business program. Minority businesses providing goods and services needed by Rock Island were given an opportunity to present themselves to the procurement and small business contacts. Steve Goff and Corey Koch saw a huge opportunity for their company, Funk Linko, that could translate into a very lucrative opportunity. “We can’t wait to get back to the office and start crunching numbers,” said Goff. This has been a great trip for us.” Similar excitement was expressed by the other minority business clients as well, who were grateful for the chance to meet these folks and to the MBOC for putting it all together.