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ACA Newsletter

Austin Energy Paid Over \$1 Million to Asian Vendors In Fiscal Year 2013

Austin— Austin Energy (AE) spent more than \$87 million in FY 2013 in construction, goods, services, of which 4.19% totaling \$1,015,177 was paid to Asian MBE vendors. The table below compares Asian goals and actual percentages and dollar amounts spent last year by AE.

Total Asian MBE Payments			
FY 2013 — Austin Energy			
Total AE Payments	\$87,33,2282		
Category	Asian Goals	Actual percentage	Asian MBE Payments
Construction	2.3%	1.06%	\$266,330
Commodity	0.7%	0.0%	\$0
Non-Professional	1.7%	2.08%	\$735,941
Professional	4.90%	1.05%	\$12,906
Total: 4.19% \$1,015,177			

The MBE goals for Austin Energy solicitations are set the same way as all the other city departments based on the available certified vendors and are set by the Department of Small and Minority Resources Department (SMBR).

Austin Energy's purchasing methods however differ slightly from other city departments as it is not only the largest city department but also a publicly-owned utility company.

Amelie Gonzalez-Flores, Senior Business Development Counselor, from Austin Energy explains that unlike other departments which have either the purchasing or contract management departments to manage their procurements and post their solicitations on the city's Vendor Connection, AE can authorize energy purchases on its own and post them on its website only.

In terms of MBE compliance plan, a recent AE RFP to procure solar energy has caused some confusion because how the solicitation is structured as both a Third Party Agreement and a city contract. MBE compliance rules are different for city projects and Third Party Agreement projects in that the MBE compliance plan is part of the bid documents for all city projects, while a Third Party Agreement Project only requires the plan be submitted after the award has been made.

This particular RFP is a Third Party Agreement project because the first phase of the RFP involves the leasing a city property to install the solar panels. It is a city project because of the actual purchase of the solar energy generated from the solar panels, according to the counselor.

For other purchases or solicitations, Austin Energy submits their requests to buyers at the city's purchasing department, which has an office within the Austin Energy. Gage Loots, Supervising Senior Buyer, who buys for Austin Energy, stationed in the city-owned company, says that Austin Energy buys goods and services ranging from equipment, chemicals, regulators, chillers, generators, software, to services such as transportation, repairs, and maintenance.

Austin Energy currently manages six power plants and buys renewable energy from wind farms and solar power plants. The selection of service providers by the utility company follows the same standards as all the other departments, Mr. Loots points out.

Companies in Texas engaged solely in the business of manufacturing, selling, or installing solar energy devices are exempt from the franchise tax. The franchise tax is Texas's equivalent to a corporate tax. There is no ceiling on this exemption, so it is a substantial incentive for solar manufacturers. The city's power purchase goes through Austin Energy directly because of the uniqueness of the commodity impacted

by the limited number of qualified suppliers in terms of their financial stability, competitive pricing, and their qualifications, according to the senior buyer.

It is also difficult to track minority participation, he



Amelie Gonzalez and Gage Loots

says, because a power purchasing contract usually lasts for 25 years with an annual cost of approximately \$80,000 to the city. Furthermore, there is no commodity code for solar energy making the task even more challenging.

Regarding local preference, Mr. Loots says that the city sets aside 3% for local preference meaning a local bidder has a 3% margin competing against the lowest bidders. If it is an RFP, there is a 10-point advantage as a local bidder.

Asian Certified Vendors Corner



Rama Tiru, owner of Tiru Gallery, is both a construction photographer and an artist. Rama, a 30-year seasoned entrepreneur, is also the first female industrial photographer in India and has won several awards including the 1990 Technocrat Award from Women Entrepreneurs Association of Karnataka and 1994 Woman Achiever of the Year Award from the Rotary Club in India.

She also holds the title of the first woman founding member, treasurer and vice chairperson of the Advertising and Industrial Photographers Association of India - South.

Since she moved to the US in 1997, she has continued her photography business in Austin, providing construction photography and videography services to companies such as Hensel Phelps, F.T. Woods, Excel, BRH Garver and other major construction companies.

Because of her accomplishments as a photographer, she was recruited by the Photography Technology Department of Austin Community College and is now teaching Photography as an Adjunct Professor at the junior college.

Among her many successful publications is a documentary-style coffee table book – “Austin East of I-35,” replete with colorful images and in-depth interviews with East Austin residents. The book is an expression of East Austin’s unique culture, personality, and life experiences. The popular book has enjoyed both critical and commercial success and is recognized by the Austin Historic Commission as the first contemporary book on East Austin.

More than 1700 copies have been sold so far, while 200 copies were donated to Austin ISD school libraries by the author. Every Austin city library now has her book in its catalogue. Furthermore, it has received wonderful reviews by KLRU, Austin Chronicle, local TV stations, and several online newspapers in the US. Overseas, positive reviews came from Times UK and South Africa.

Awards and Shows

Awards

2005 Recognition of Merit at Kerrville Photography show
1990 Technocrat Award from Women Entrepreneurs Association of Karnataka

1994 Woman Achiever of the year in the most unusual field-Rotary Club

1999-2000 Highest Profit Performance - Second Place
Lifetouch Portrait Studios of America

1999-2000 Studio Manager of the month one of 5 in
USA - Lifetouch Portrait Studios

1999-2000 Studio Manager of the month for the District -
Lifetouch Portrait Studios

Exhibitions

2014 Group shows at AVVA Austin

2014 Group show at LaPena Austin

2014 Group Show WEST at LaPena

2013 Participated in the EAST Show

2012-13 various shows in Austin

2012 Participated in the WEST Show

2012 Volunteered photography services for Saiva – a non profit organization

2012 Produced a Documentary “Empowered” and showcased it in Lapenya

2011 LaPenya and Various Galleries in Austin

2010 Book Signing events at various venues in Austin

2010 Studio 2 Gallery in Austin Texas

2009 Works on Display at the offices of Councilors

Randy Shade and Chris Riley’s offices at the Austin City Hall

2009 To: Austin, From: Austin ABIA Austin

2009 Muntu show at Space 12 Austin

2008 Map Group Show

2008 Real Gallery Group Show

2008 Faces of Tibet South Western University Georgetown Texas

2008 Audi Forum New York

2008 Art Show Dallas Convention center

2008 Pink Amor Tiru Gallery

2007 Corners of the world show International Visitors Center Austin

2007 Corners of the world show Tiru Gallery

2007 EAST Show Austin

2006 permanent collection of Premier Realty

2004 & 2005 various corporate venues in Austin and Permanent Collection at RTgallery and ACC

2003 DSMBR

2003 Driskill Hotel

2003 Bei Amici

2003 LaPena Gallery

2003 Guadalupe Art Gallery

2002 F8 Fine Art Gallery, Austin, TX

2002 RT gallerie: permanent show of Rama Tiru

2002 Austin Lyric Opera: art work on display as part of Tips on Art Collection, Austin, Texas

2001 Pro-Jex Gallery Austin: People of Papua-Color images, and Street Smart-B&W images

1999 Barnes and Noble at the Arboretum: digital images, Austin, TX

1998 Sumukha gallery: Curves and Lines, a B&W collection of photographs, Bangalore India

1997 Alliance Francaise: First Photo-Graphics One woman show Bangalore, India

1996 Commissioned by the Association of Indian Architects Southern Regional Conference to present a One-Woman Show of architectural photo-digital images based on the theme of Deconstruction

Past Prime Contractor of the Year Winners Summoned to Network with Minority Contractors

Austin— Austin's Small & Minority Business Resources Department (SMBR) hosted its annual "Meet the Prime – Construction Workshop & Networking Session" at the One Texas Center on June 24, 2014. Five "Prime Contractor of the Year" honorees from 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2012 arrived along with five more prime contractors, that have won city contracts in the past, to meet with minority contractors seeking future subcontracting opportunities and possible long term partnerships.

These Prime contractors are Hensel Phelps Construction (2006), Solis Constructors, Inc. (2007), Southland Contracting, Inc (2008), Harvey-Cleary Builders (2009), Texas Solar Power (2012), Flintco, LLC, Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR), JE Dunn, Mastec, and Wright Tree.

Blender Hill, Public Information Specialist Senior of SMBR, who organizes the annual event, says that the format of the event is a little different this year. "We host a meet the prime session at least once a year; however, in the past we would have a panel who would talk about their experiences and answer questions. This year, we used a different setup in which we invite prime contractors who have been recognized during our Contractor and Consultant of the Year celebration. We also opened it up to allow other prime contractors to come out if they wished to participate."

The new format allows minority contractors to have ample face time and one on one exchanges with the primes. To be able to network with the prime contractors is something many minority contractors have indicated that they needed help with, according to Ms. Hill. By hosting a networking session with prime contractors who have demonstrated a good track record in using minority subcontractors, SMBR hopes that "our certified vendors will form some new relationships that help them grow their business and allow them to ask specific questions one-on-one that they would not normally address in the past format," she says.

Although some of the prime contractors at the session are not on city projects presently, Ms. Hill says that the city's goal is to help minority contractors form partnerships with prime contractors on any projects whether they be city, state or federal projects.

To further assist minority contractors participate in city projects, SMBR has hosted special workshops in the past for projects over \$5 million dollars, such as

the Water Treatment Plant 4 and Waller Creek projects. Project managers were invited to brief on the scope of work and requirements so certified vendors could better prepare and align themselves to propose on those type of work needed. Ms. Blender comments that her department plans to host more "Big Projects" workshops in the future.

Ms. Hill has worked for the City of Austin for 13 years and has been with SMBR since 2008. She has a BA in Mass Communications from Grambling State University, an MBA in Finance from LeTourneau University and Leadership Austin Essential Class of 2011.



Blender Hill (above) welcomed both prime and minority contractors to the event. Prime contractors clockwise: Hensel Phelps, Flintco, JE Dunn, and Harvey Cleary

