

CHAPTER 5: PROMOTING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to connecting residents to a variety of supportive services, the CHA encourages economic self-sufficiency for residents through internal policies and programs that expand access to employment and contracting opportunities. To increase awareness of potential options to conduct business with the CHA, the CHA held information sessions throughout FY2004. At the sessions, the CHA explained ways to become a certified Minority, Women, and Disadvantaged Business Owners (M/W/DBE) and described a variety of the CHA sponsored programs that support economic self-sufficiency, including the Section 3 Program, Earn and Learn Program, and an alternative procurement process that supports resident-owned businesses.

MINORITY, WOMEN, AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS OWNERS (M/W/DBE)

To support economic development opportunities, the CHA encourages the creation, growth, and involvement of M/W/DBEs. Specifically, the CHA's construction and service contracts of \$25,000 or more must meet the appropriate level of M/W/DBE Program participation. In addition to these financial requirements, the CHA conducted outreach throughout FY2004 for M/W/DBEs through "How to Do Business with the CHA" training and Six-Step Series Workshops. These regular trainings provided an opportunity for M/W/DBEs to obtain information on contracting opportunities with the CHA as well as suggestions for developing a business.

"How to Do Business with the CHA"

On a quarterly basis, the CHA held "How to Do Business with the CHA" training sessions which provided participants with information on the procurement process, M/W/DBE and Section 3 compliance, and upcoming procurement opportunities.



The CHA hosts training sessions, workshops, and networking events for parties interested in doing business with the CHA, as well as for CHA resident-owned businesses.



Six-Step Series Workshops

The CHA residents and other low-income individuals were invited to attend the Six-Step Series Workshops which provided steps on creating and managing a business. Some of the topics addressed at the workshops included the legal formation of a business, preparation of a business plan, marketing, and financial awareness.

Also during the year, CHA Procurement Buyers and Compliance Policy Monitoring specialists attended a number of events targeted to M/W/DBEs and sponsored by local organizations. Some of the sponsoring organizations for the M/W/DBE outreach events included:

- Chicago Cosmopolitan Chamber of Congress;
- Chicago Park District;
- City of Chicago;
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and
- Women's Business Development Council.

SECTION 3 OUTREACH

The goal of the Section 3 Program is to ensure that low and very low-income individuals are provided employment and other economic opportunities through contracts paid for with HUD funds. To meet this objective, the CHA established a system that determines participation based upon contract amount and type. The system requires that at least 30% of a contractor's new hires on qualifying contracts with the CHA be Section 3 residents from the property where work is being performed. However, if contractors are unable to meet this requirement, they can fulfill it by providing alternative economic opportunities for Section 3 residents. These opportunities might include providing training for Section 3 individuals or contributing to the CHA's Section 3 Compliance Fund. The CHA conducted outreach for the Section 3 Program throughout FY2004 including informing residents of employment and training opportunities, enrollment in the CHA's Section 3 Database, and business development workshop registration.



EARN AND LEARN

In October 2004, the CHA created the Earn and Learn Program to further assist residents and other low-income individuals as they continue to move towards economic self-sufficiency. Program participants have the opportunity to obtain internships with participating companies to assist with the transition to full employment and strategies to develop a business. As of the end of FY2004, 75 residents were scheduled to participate in the program in the upcoming year.

ALTERNATIVE PROCUREMENT PROCESS

To further increase contracting opportunities available to residents, the CHA uses its Alternative Procurements Process to identify procurements that will only be solicited to resident-owned businesses (ROBs). Contracts with ROBs were established for a number of goods and services, such as catering, building maintenance, and construction throughout FY2004.