

Frequently Asked Questions 2006 Program Year

What is the Business Matchmaking program?

Business Matchmaking is a partnership between the U.S. Small Business Administration, SCORE and HP, matching small companies with federal, state, and local government agencies and large corporations that have contract opportunities or are able to create new relationships for future contracts. The program's goal is to stimulate jobs and growth for small business by taking advantage of opportunities that are normally relegated to distinct geographical areas such as the Washington DC Beltway or the city where a major corporation is located.

Business Matchmaking combines education and counseling by expert small business advisors and topical experts with networking and face-to-face procurement appointments through regional events. In addition to the regional events, the Business Matchmaking Online Network, to be introduced in February 2006, will offer online education tools such as the Virtual Business Matchmaking Workshop, monthly educational "webinars", important downloads and links and in select circumstances, provides small business owners direct access to select buyers from government agencies and major corporations.

Who is Business Matchmaking for?

This program is specifically tailored to small businesses that are prepared for the challenges of doing business with government agencies and major corporations. Our experience has demonstrated these are businesses that have the infrastructure to accommodate contract opportunities. While some start-ups are able to quickly enter the procurement arena, a few years experience, adequate working capital and some technology infrastructure can be critical to achieving success. In that regard, all small businesses must complete the "Central Contractor Registration (CCR)"

(www.CCR.gov) process in order to participate. Also, many companies have succeeded in Business Matchmaking because they have pursued the following:

1. Certification as an 8(a), Minority, Disabled Veteran and/or HUB Zone company
2. Consultation with SBA, SCORE and/or SBDC

What is the 2006 Regional Event Schedule?

- Monday, February 13, 2006 – Western Regional SF Bay Area
- Wednesday, August 2, 2006 – Southwestern Regional - Houston
- Friday, September 22, 2006 – Eastern Regional Philadelphia (*in conjunction with US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's 27th Annual National Convention*)
- Thursday, November 16, 2006 – Southeastern Regional - Miami/Ft. Lauderdale

What does participation cost?

There is no cost to participate for buyers or sellers. The program is fully funded by a public/private sector agreement between the SBA, SCORE and HP. Additional private sector companies provide co-sponsorship support throughout the year. Through the support of these organizations, Business Matchmaking is offered free to all participants.

How many representatives from each company may attend regional events?

A maximum of two representatives from each participating small business may attend.

How does the Business Matchmaking process work?

We have established an online Matchmaking portal that allows a small business, or "seller" to register and manage their schedule for each Regional event. Registration takes only a couple of minutes and provides login information that allows access to the portal for providing a business profile and ultimately, setting of meetings with participating, appropriately matched buyers. All appointment setting for each regional event occurs in the weeks before each event. Registered participants create their own schedule based upon keywords provided that are in turn used to match businesses with procurement representatives.

How do you match buyers and sellers?

Utilizing the United Nations Standard Products and Services Code® (UNSPSC®), small businesses are able to highlight their products and services. The Matchmaking system then uses the codes as the basis of determining what buying organizations these small businesses appropriately match with in order to set appointments. It is up to each registered small business to enter their codes in advance of each event during the specified period of time in order to set their appointment schedule before attending. Business Matchmaking counselors are available to assist with each step of the process. To learn more about what UNSPSC codes define your business, visit www.unspsc.org.

How many appointments can a participating company expect?

On average 3-5 appointments per participating small business. There are opportunities to obtain more appointments on-site with special last minute availability and many businesses get upwards of 10 appointments by pursuing these opportunities during regional events.

What is the agenda for Business Matchmaking Regional Events?

7:00 a.m. – Small Business Check In and –Business Matchmaking Service area opens for counseling with SBA, SCORE, SBDC and other small business resource partners.
Network with event co-sponsors

8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Business Matchmaking Face-to-Face appointments

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. – Workshop #1

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. - Workshop #2

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. – Lunch Break

1:30 p.m. – Business Matchmaking Face-to-Face appointments resume

2:00 p.m. – Workshop #3

3:30 pm – Workshop # 4

6:00 p.m. – Business Matchmaking Event Ends

What is the format for the Business Matchmaking face-to-face meetings?

Meetings are fifteen minutes in length with a five-minute break in between to allow buyers and sellers to move to their next appointment. Maximize your time with each buyer. Here is a suggested way to break down the 15-minute meeting:

- 2 minutes - Introduction and brief company overview
- 3 minutes - Description of products and services
- 3 minutes - Description of past performance and successes
- 5 minutes - Interaction with the buyer to learn more about opportunities and next steps

The companies that prepare in advance get the most out of their meetings. Visit a buyer's company or agency web site, peruse their procurement needs and RFPs to become familiar with their buying needs.

What other activities do regional Business Matchmaking events offer?

- HP Tech Center provides Internet access, printers and technicians to prepare for meetings, access the Matchmaking system to view schedules and check email.
- Individual business counseling and guidance prior to and following each regional event to prepare for active participation.
- In addition to the pre-set appointments, Business Matchmaking provides small businesses valuable insight on marketing, financing and running a growing business through educational seminars on a variety of relevant topics.
- Officials from federal, state and local government and large corporations on site to discuss services, such as SBA financing, federal qualification requirements, minority, veteran and women-owned business opportunities and more.
- Counselors from the SBA, SCORE, SBDC and other local resource partners
- Access to representatives from private sector co-sponsors for information about their companies

How and when do small businesses register?

Registration normally becomes available within six weeks of a given event. Please visit www.BusinessMatchmaking.com to learn about the 2006 schedule and registration dates.

Can a business register in person at regional face-to-face events?

Due to the extensive preparation that will go into each business' participation in the program, on-site registrations will not be accepted.

Will companies be given contracts during the regional events?

The Business Matchmaking program provides unique opportunities for small businesses to meet with government agencies and large corporations in a way not previously possible on such a large-scale basis. While the program doesn't guarantee contracts, simply because of the nature of the normal bidding process between buyers and suppliers, it does create opportunities for small businesses to hold personal, one-on-one meetings with potential clients that would have taken weeks or months to schedule on their own. Since the start of the program, nearly 40,000 appointments have occurred resulting in tens of millions of dollars in contracts.

What is the Business Matchmaking Online Network?

Offered to small businesses located anywhere in the U.S, the Business Matchmaking Online Network will serve to prepare small business owners and managers to participate in procurement opportunities - either through Business Matchmaking regional events or through a business' own direct outreach through techniques and insights learned through this program. The Online Network will offer online educational tools including the Virtual Business Matchmaking Workshop, monthly "webinars" featuring procurement and supplier diversity experts, access to important downloads of articles and links to helpful resources. In select cases, participants will be provided direct access to select buyers from government agencies and major corporations as a first step in the selling process.

The Business Matchmaking Online Network will launch on February 1, 2006 at www.BusinessMatchmaking.com.

How do you initiate participation in the Business Matchmaking Online Network?

Step One: Register in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) Database (www.CCR.gov)

Any vendor that wishes to sell its products or services to the federal government are required to register in CCR in order to be awarded contracts and receive payment. This is a one-time routine registration where basic information is provided relevant to procurement and financial transactions. If a business has not registered, they must obtain a DUNS number, provided by Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). You may learn more about this process at <http://smallbusiness.dnb.com>.

Step Two: Register for Business Matchmaking National Online Network:

Participants that have previously attended or registered for Business Matchmaking regional face-to-face events will have their companies automatically enrolled in the new online network. New participants will find the registration link on the Business Matchmaking home page starting February 1, 2006

Step Three: Utilize the Tools, Education and Resources Offered through the Online Network

Starting February 1, 2006, the Online Network will launch with the Virtual Business Matchmaking Workshop, a host of helpful articles, tools, interviews and downloads provided by Business Matchmaking partners and co-sponsors as well as procurement experts from the SBA, SCORE, government agencies and major corporations. You will want to check back regularly to see what new material has been added to the Online Network and we will send you regular newsletter updates letting you know when you can view these new content additions.

Who are the buyers (government agencies and large corporations) that participate in Business Matchmaking?

The list of buyers - agencies and corporations - who regularly participate in Business Matchmaking can be found at www.businessmatchmaking.com in the "Archives" section.

Does a company need to have a specific certification with the government in order to participate?

While it is not mandatory that a business is certified it does greatly assist in securing contracts as many organizations seek companies that have select certifications. This includes 8(a), Women and Minority certification, HubZone, Veteran and Disabled Veteran status. The SBA provides a comprehensive certification process at www.sba.gov. For more information on the certification status in doing business with the government, visit <http://www.sba.gov/businessop/basics/buys.html>.

What should small business owners do to prepare for the Matchmaking Experience?

- **Prepare and Anticipate** -- In anticipation of talking with procurement representatives, have basic materials describing your company and its products and services in good order. Practice how to briefly describe what your company does because your time is limited with these procurement representatives.
- **Register in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) Database (www.CCR.gov)** -- Any vendor that wishes to sell its products or services to the federal government are required to register in CCR in order to be awarded contracts and receive payment. This is a one-time routine registration where basic information is provided relevant to procurement and financial transactions. If a business has not registered, they must obtain a DUNS number, provided by Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). You may learn more about this process at <http://smallbusiness.dnb.com>.
- **Utilize SBA, SCORE and SBDC Resources** -- If a business has any questions, however routine, pay a visit to the SBA, SCORE or the SBDC centers located in your community or visit their web sites: www.sba.gov; www.score.org; www.sba.gov/sbdc
- **Review the Material Provided** -- Get familiar with the material provided through the electronic tutorial -- particularly that which describes the various resources the SBA, SCORE, SBDC and others make available in the local community. Visit the Business Matchmaking web site (www.BusinessMatchmaking.com) to review materials offered there as well.

How is small business defined?

The SBA's standards define whether a business entity is small and, thus, eligible for Government programs and preferences reserved for "small business" concerns. Size standards have been established for all for-profit economic activities, or industries, in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For complete details, visit <http://www.sba.gov/size>.