

## Recommendation Form Worksheet

**TITLE** Woman and Minority Owned Business Connection Forum(s)

### **PROBLEM**

James Madison University has exceeded our *total* 42% goal with Small, Women and Minority-owned firms for years; however, the main reason we exceed the total goal is due to our high spend with Small businesses. In FY20 we achieved 62.5% in SWaM expenditures; however, 55% of that was with small firms. We continue to be weak in both the women-owned category at 6.1% and especially the minority-owned category at only 1.4%.

Finding competitive certified woman-owned and minority-owned firms for items the university purchases remains difficult. With a total discretionary spend of over \$181M, in FY20, to generate larger percentages we need to increase spend with these types of firms by millions of dollars annually. The Commonwealth of Virginia's new goal (established in January 2021) for women and minority spend (combined) is 23.1%. Using FY20 numbers the university would have to spend just over \$41 Million with firms certified in these two categories to have met that goal. In FY20 we spent just over \$13 Million. In addition to adjusting who we make small dollar purchases from, to generate the identified percentage goals would take significant woman-owned and minority-owned business involvement in high dollar expenditure categories like A/E and Construction and/or IT systems. The other high dollar area for campus is Library subscriptions, but we are limited in options in this area as most of these are only available from sole source publishing firms.

An additional problem is that most construction related SWaM spend comes from small businesses in our local area and there are currently few certified local women-owned or minority-owned firms.

**RECOMMENDATION** This recommendation supports working specifically to locate and engage more eligible women-owned and minority-owned firms that may be able to become certified and compete for JMU opportunities.

Engage a Diverse Event Planning Firm (All About Presentations is a contracted Woman and Minority Owned Firm) to assist JMU to plan and host a *Woman and Minority Owned* firm Connection/Conference sometime between December 2021 and August 2022 (assuming COVID issues have subsided).

- Coordinate with organizations like the Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity, Department of General Services – eVA Representatives, local Small Business Development Center, Virginia Asian and Minority Chambers of Commerce, National Minority Supplier Development Council, Women’s Business Enterprise National Council, HBCUs and other Virginia Higher Ed Institutions and internal organizations like the Economic Development Steering Committee, Professional & Continuing Education, Gilliam Center, and potentially alumni relations (if there are known alumni with women and minority owned businesses) to ensure robust content and marketing specific to women-owned and minority-owned firms.
  - o Include sessions that focus on teaching the businesses how to do business with JMU and the Commonwealth (including eVA registration and SWaM certification w/onsite application assistance).
  - o Include sessions that allow for Women and Minorities to express barriers specific to their firms in doing business with JMU and recommend potential solutions.
  - o Include sessions that discuss resources (financing and other assistance) and organizations that can specifically assist women and minority owned firms.
  - o Include Commonwealth of Virginia Diversity and Inclusion officials.
- Receive VP Support for the Connection Forum and ensure that multiple high-level decision makers (VPs, AVPs, Deans/Dept Heads) are available from each area to participate in networking with the businesses present in order to connect businesses with on-going departmental needs and to show support for increasing opportunities for women and minority owned businesses.
- Include major Prime Contractors (inclusive of Aramark) for connection to sub-contracting opportunities.
- *Potentially* (as resources are available) have an initial major event and then host additional quarterly or bi-yearly events for all SWaM businesses that help to educate on doing business with JMU, eVA registration and SWaM certification. (Work with local SBDC to ensure no duplication, as they have already been scheduling monthly sessions on these same topics).

**RATIONALE** A major event with a targeted marketing initiative will help to draw in women and minority owned firms that have an interest in doing business with JMU and women and minorities that may be considering venturing into entrepreneurship. Would create a space where the specific challenges of women and minority owned firms can be heard and discussed. Provide connections for women and minority owned firms in a space

unique to their circumstances, and attempt to connect them with actual current/future opportunities on campus and with our prime contractors. Would provide them with ongoing resources for future connection, assistance and success. Would reflect serious investment of JMU to increasing women and minority owned expenditures and growing local women and minority owned businesses either through direct or sub-contracting opportunities.

## SUCCESS

- More women and minority owned firms would become certified with the Commonwealth of Virginia and registered as viable vendors in the eVA system.
- Spend with women and minority owned businesses would increase.
- Barriers to business would be identified and with intention removed/reduced as appropriate.
- Long term connections and relationships would be established to continue the advancement of supporting historically disadvantaged businesses.