

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY – BROADENING OPPORTUNITY FOR QUALIFIED SUPPLIERS



**Construction
Inclusion Week**

TOOLBOX TALKS

13



Estimated Time:
15 minutes max



Audience:
**All employees, especially
Project Managers, procurement,
estimating and leadership**

CIW PILLARS:

*Economic Opportunity, Community
Engagement, Commitment & Accountability*

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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

This Toolbox Talk is provided as a voluntary workforce development resource in support of Construction Inclusion Week. It does not impose or endorse any directives, quotas, or identity-based exclusions or preferences.

The content reflects voluntary best practices and is designed to promote safety, opportunity, and inclusive team culture benefiting everyone across the construction industry, to help support, attract, and retain top talent.

Construction Inclusion Week does not control or endorse the content of third-party links. Activities should be adapted to align with your company's legal policies and job-related criteria.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This conversation explores how your team's choices, especially around who gets hired for work, can build stronger communities and create long-term opportunity.

- Understand how inclusive procurement and contracting decisions creates economic opportunity and drives job creation.
- Learn how expanding your vendor network opens doors.
- Identify common barriers smaller firms face and how to reduce them.
- See how inclusive sourcing supports training, access and fair opportunity.
- Explore new ways to engage local or first-time suppliers' participation in your projects.

DEFINITIONS

Economic Opportunity:

Access to income, contracts, and business growth that helps communities and workers succeed.

Workforce Multiplier Effect:

When supplier contracts lead to local jobs, apprenticeship, skills training, and career growth.

New or Underused Supplier:

A small or local business that may not have had full access to past bids or networks.

Capacity Building:

Support programs and partnerships that help smaller businesses compete and deliver on contracts.

KEY CONCEPTS:

- **Economic Opportunity doesn't just mean hiring workers, it includes who we hire to do the work.**
- Construction impacts local economies, and who we work with matters.
- Smaller businesses often hire local, invest in workers and create first job chances into the industry.



KEY CONCEPTS:

- Expanding your vendor/supplier lists increases competition and broadens access to qualified firms. Final procurement decisions remain based on neutral factors such as cost, safety, quality, and reliability.
- **Many of these businesses don't need handouts, they need access, support, and a fair chance to compete.**
- Who you buy from can influence pathways into the industry: Ensure outreach is broad and process is competitively neutral; decisions are based on objective performance factors.

Every project involves choices: who we work with, who we hire, and where we spend money. These choices influences access to jobs, training, and a future in construction.

When we broaden outreach to include small, local, or newer businesses, we expand competition. Many firms often hire local talent, invest in training, and create first-job opportunities. Some face barriers such as unclear requirements, or limited access to bidding processes.





Opening doors means ensuring qualified firms have fair access to compete; standards remain consistent and job- related. That can include updating vendor lists, publicizing opportunities, inviting new companies to bid, and asking: “Who is not aware of this opportunity, and why?”

When we widen the pool of suppliers, we build better projects and stronger teams. We also show that construction offers fair and open access to opportunity.

Your role in procurement, estimating, or project management can create access for others. That’s leadership. That’s economic opportunity in action.

Procurement decisions use objective, transparent, and consistently applied criteria; no preferences are based on protected characteristics.



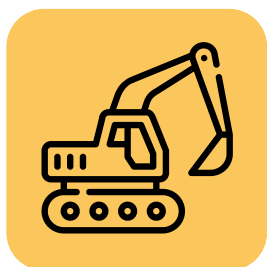


ACTIVITY OPTIONS:

General Ask:

Think of a time when your project worked with a new or small business. What stood out about their impact, story, or workforce? Now ask: Are we doing enough to make room for new, local, emerging or underused firms?

The following page includes ways to practice mentorship, on site, in the office, or with community partners:



**JOBSITE
ACTIVITIES**



**OFFICE
ACTIVITIES**



**SCHOOL/
COMMUNITY
ACTIVITIES**



**GROUP
ACTIVITY**



JOBSITE ACTIVITIES

- Highlight a local trade partner during your morning huddle.
- Create a **“Partner spotlight”** board featuring photos or stories of their impact.
- Ask each crew to learn one new fact about a local or first-time contractor on site.
- Invite a supplier rep to share about how they got started and whom they hire.
- Share a story of a supplier that helped someone get their start in the industry.
- Build a jobsite map showing where local vendors/suppliers and their workers are based, highlighting local pride.



OFFICE ACTIVITIES

- Review current vendor lists for opportunities to expand to local or new certified businesses.
- Host a **“Meet the Builder”** day to connect estimating or procurement with newer vendors.
- Add a line in RFPs encouraging mentorship, job creation, or local hiring.
- Track which partners create entry-level opportunities or apprenticeships. Feature a **“New Voices in Construction”** vendor/supplier story in internal communications.



SCHOOL/COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Partner with small business that hire youth, reentry, or second chance workers.
- Sponsor a career day with emerging vendors and hands-on demos.
- Invite suppliers to speak with students about careers and business ownership.
- Host a **“Build Local, Hire Local”** community partners.
- Help students to design posters or social media posts about **“Why Local Business Matters.”**



GROUP ACTIVITIES

- In pairs, discuss: What makes it hard for small or new firms to break in?
- Brainstorm: How can we be more open and supportive as a team or site?
- Create a team pledge to help expand access in your next project.
- Watch a short video or read an article about local partners' success stories.
- List 5 benefits of growing your network, and who benefits most.



*When we build
with everyone, we
build stronger.*

*Economic
opportunity opens
doors for
everyone.*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What's the link between who we hire and who has a career path in construction?
2. What gets in the way of working with small or emerging firms?
3. How can we remove barriers and create more access through our contracts?
4. Who on our team has the ability to open doors through procurement or project planning?
5. What's one simple action we can take to open doors wider in procurement or partnership?

**When we include more voices in how we build,
we open doors for jobs, skills, and futures.**



THIS WEEK:

- Learn about a supplier you have not worked with before.
- Share one way your project supports economic opportunity.
- Invite a small or local firm to attend your next outreach event.
- Share a story about how someone got their start because of a contract.
- Challenge your next project team to expand beyond the usual vendor list.



POST YOUR IMPACT:

#ConstructionInclusionWeek
#CIWOpeningDoors
#EconomicOpportunity

Resources:

- *Small Business Administration (SBA)*
- *Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)*
- *Disability: IN Supplier Diversity Program*
- *aptac-us.org*