

Meeting Notes: Washington-Oregon Community Networking Group

Date: May 18, 2026

Time: 1pm-2pm

Meeting Type: Virtual Networking & Business Opportunity Meeting

Facilitators: Ryan Taylor (Golden Gift Consulting), Cedric Austin (DES)

Guest Contributors & Advisors: Barbara Alexander-Brown, George Frost, Veronica Ybarra

Meeting Length: Approximately 1 Hour

Participants: 25

Agenda Overview

Ryan Taylor opened the meeting by explaining that the Washington-Oregon Community Networking Group is intended to be a safe space for small businesses, organizational representatives, and community partners to share information, discuss business opportunities, build relationships, and support equitable partnerships. The meeting included:

- Business opportunity updates
 - Washington state event announcements
 - Facilitated networking and discussion on barriers to contracting
 - Resource sharing and peer learning
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Business Opportunity Updates

Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Program

Ryan Taylor presented upcoming opportunities related to the Interstate Bridge Replacement Program.

Construction Industry Day

Participants were informed about an upcoming Construction Industry Day event related to the Columbia River Bridge Replacement Project:

- Date: June 4, 2026
- Time: 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- Location: Luepke Community Center, Vancouver, Washington
- Virtual participation option available

The event is intended for architects, engineers, contractors, consultants, and small businesses interested in subcontracting opportunities. Representatives from the IBR Program will discuss upcoming procurements and networking opportunities.

Kiewit Outreach & Bidding Opportunities

Ryan discussed Kiewit's outreach events held on May 13 and May 14 related to the IBR Program and noted that Kiewit is expected to seek numerous subcontractors and suppliers for the project.

Examples of anticipated opportunities included, but were not limited to:

- Civil and structural design
- Environmental services
- Material testing
- Electrical and lighting
- Structural steel
- Traffic control
- Trucking and hauling
- Landscaping and erosion control
- Ready-mix concrete and aggregates

Participants were informed that the PowerPoint deck would be shared after the meeting so firms could review the detailed opportunity lists.

Harborview Medical Center Projects

Ryan Taylor presented several Harborview Medical Center construction and infrastructure opportunities.

New Pioneer Square Clinic

Harborview seeks firms with healthcare and preservation experience to support seismic upgrades and tenant improvements.

- Anticipated Release: Q3 2026
- Estimated Value: \$20 million

Multidisciplinary Architectural & Engineering Services

Harborview plans to solicit teams for strategic planning, design, engineering, permitting, and construction administration services.

- Anticipated Release: Q3 2026
- Estimated Value: \$5 million

GC/CM for Ninth & Jefferson MRI Project

Harborview seeks a general contractor/construction manager for MRI scanner installation and remodeling work.

- Anticipated Release: Q2 2026
- Estimated Value: \$7 million

The opportunities include architectural, engineering, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, structural steel, and healthcare infrastructure services.

Parks Tacoma Small Works Roster

Ryan shared information regarding Parks Tacoma's Small Works Roster.
Key details:

- Roster may be used for public works contracts under \$350,000
- Application deadline: December 31, 2026
- Public works contractors are encouraged to apply

Participants were informed that application information and contact details would be included in the meeting materials.

Washington State Events & Opportunities

Cedric Austin from the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services (DES) provided updates on upcoming events and procurement opportunities.

City of Seattle Reverse Vendor Trade Show

Cedric highlighted the June 3 Reverse Vendor Trade Show hosted by the City of Seattle.
Key points:

- DES, WSDOT, and City of Seattle representatives will attend
- Event expected to attract more than 700 participants
- Intended to connect businesses with procurement representatives and opportunities

DES Construction & Public Works Opportunities

Cedric noted:

- DES currently has significant construction-related work available
- West Side Job Contracting opportunities are open through June 12
- Opportunities are available through WEBS and Bonfire/UNA procurement systems

Cedric also emphasized ongoing efforts by DES to improve small business visibility and access to statewide contracts and procurement staff.

Facilitated Networking & Discussion

The facilitated networking topic focused on barriers to securing government and commercial contracts for small businesses and barriers agencies and general contractors face in working with subcontractors.

Small Business Barriers Discussed

Difficulty Identifying Procurement Contacts

Monica Colgan (Launch Industries) shared that one of her primary challenges is identifying the correct procurement contacts within agencies associated with DES statewide contracts. She explained that there is no centralized public contact list and that outreach efforts can be time-consuming and discouraging.

Cedric Austin responded by describing DES's "Statewide Contracting Series," which brings statewide contract holders together with agency procurement staff to create direct networking and relationship-building opportunities.

Lack of Work Utilization on Contracts

Participants discussed concerns about businesses obtaining statewide contracts but not receiving actual work.

Katrina Simmons shared concerns from both her own experience and from clients regarding:

- Winning contracts but receiving little or no work
- The financial burden of needing cash flow upfront before reimbursement payments arrive
- Difficulty covering payroll, insurance, and startup costs before payment is received

Veronica Ybarra clarified that many reimbursement-based grants and contracts require businesses to have sufficient working capital to operate before reimbursement occurs.

Ryan Taylor emphasized that statewide contracts should be viewed as valuable business development tools, but not as guarantees of work.

Cash Flow & Mobilization Challenges

Estrella Sung discussed the challenges many firms face in funding:

- Insurance requirements
- Mobilization costs
- Payroll and startup expenses

She encouraged businesses to:

- Continue attending events and building relationships
- Follow up consistently with agencies and contractors
- Seek grants and financial assistance where available

Barbara Alexander-Brown added that firms should explore:

- SBA working capital loan programs
 - Short-term financing resources
 - Negotiating mobilization advances or payment terms with primes
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Questions About Networking Event Effectiveness

Christina asked whether there is measurable data showing that networking and matchmaking events lead to actual contract awards or utilization.

Cedric Austin explained that:

- Capturing long-term utilization outcomes across agencies is difficult
- DES does send surveys after events, though response rates are low
- Event effectiveness often depends on preparation, relationship-building, and strategic follow-up by participating businesses

Participants discussed the importance of researching agencies and procurement needs before attending events.

Relationship Building & Long-Term Engagement

Several speakers emphasized:

- The importance of persistence and continued participation
- The value of relationship-building over time
- The importance of capability statements and targeted outreach

Cedric noted that contracting relationships often take years to develop and encouraged businesses to:

- Share barriers directly with agencies
- Build relationships with engagement specialists
- Continue attending outreach events and trainings

Andromeda Ledesma encouraged participants to attend DES statewide contract holder workshops and networking events to build stronger understanding of procurement systems and vendor engagement.

Strategic Business Development Suggestions

Sanjay Shirude encouraged businesses to:

- Research agencies before outreach
 - Understand agency purchasing needs
 - Position services as solutions to agency problems
 - Shift from reactive outreach to proactive engagement
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Interstate Bridge Vendor Portal Update

Barbara Alexander-Brown provided an update on the IBR Vendor Portal.

Key points:

- The portal is being integrated into procurement and outreach efforts

- Businesses are encouraged to upload:
 - Capability statements
 - Statements of qualifications
 - Resumes and supporting materials
- The system allows task leads and future prime contractors to search for firms by NAICS code and capabilities

Barbara emphasized that:

- Firms registered in the portal are better positioned to be identified by future primes
- The system will improve visibility for small and local businesses
- The IBR team plans to track engagement and participation data to better understand outcomes and utilization

Key Themes & Discussion Highlights

Recurring themes throughout the meeting included:

- Relationship-building is critical to long-term contracting success
- Many small businesses struggle with cash flow and reimbursement timing
- Businesses often need more direct access to procurement contacts
- Matchmaking and networking opportunities remain valuable but require strategic follow-up
- Agencies continue exploring ways to improve small business visibility and utilization
- Persistence, preparation, and proactive engagement are essential for small business growth

Follow-Up & Next Steps

Participants were encouraged to:

- Register for the IBR Vendor Portal
- Attend upcoming networking and procurement events
- Continue participating in DES training opportunities
- Follow up with agency representatives and facilitators
- Share barriers and recommendations with agencies and BDAG representatives

The next Washington-Oregon Community Networking Group meeting will be held:

- June 15, 2026
- 12:00 p.m.
- Microsoft Teams