



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 9, 2024

MEDIA CONTACT: Eric Veronikis, everonikis@pa.gov

Shapiro-Davis Administration, Sen. Casey Hosts Second Annual Small Business Empowerment Summit to Connect Small Businesses With State And Federal Contracting Opportunities

The second annual summit featured remarks from Gov. Shapiro, U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, Lt. Gov. Davis, DGS Secretary Reggie McNeil, panel discussions, and networking between small business owners and Commonwealth procurement professionals.

Harrisburg, PA – Today, the **Department of General Services (DGS)**, in partnership with **U.S. Sen. Bob Casey’s** office, hosted the second annual **Small Business Empowerment Summit** at the Hilton Harrisburg. The event brought together more than 400 owners of small businesses (SB), small diverse businesses (SDB), veteran business enterprises (VBE), government and nonprofit leaders, and procurement specialists for a day of collaboration and insight. The event emphasized the **Shapiro-Davis-Administration’s Commitment** to empowering small businesses through increased access to state and federal contracting opportunities.

The summit featured keynote remarks from **Gov. Josh Shapiro, U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, Lt. Gov. Austin Davis**, and **Department of General Services Secretary Reggie McNeil**, who highlighted the vital role that SBs, SDBs, and VBEs play in Pennsylvania’s economy and the ongoing efforts to enhance their participation in government contracts.

“Since I’ve taken office, my Administration has made substantial progress towards opening up state contracts for more small, diverse businesses. Thanks to that work, my Administration has given more state contracts to small diverse businesses in the last fiscal year than we ever have in our Commonwealth’s history,” said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. “More small business owners are getting the chance to do business with the Commonwealth – and that means we’re opening the opportunity for more Pennsylvanians to create generational wealth, all while ensuring that our Commonwealth gets the best products and services.”

“Small businesses are the backbone of the Commonwealth’s economy. Making sure that these businesses have the tools they need to succeed is critical to building a strong economy and helping our families get ahead,” **said Senator Casey**. “Our Small Business Empowerment

Summit provides an opportunity to share information and resources to help Pennsylvania businesses thrive.”

The event included panel discussions, networking opportunities, and presentations on the latest initiatives designed to streamline the procurement process for small businesses.

Under the **Shapiro-Davis Administration**, these initiatives are yielding tangible results, with the Commonwealth directing nearly \$700 million to contracts with SDBs and VBEs during the 2022-23 fiscal year — a record amount and a notable increase from the \$562 million invested the previous fiscal year.

"Governor Shapiro and I have put a lot of time and energy into reaching out and leveling the playing field for small businesses, so that they know about opportunities to do business with the Commonwealth, and they have the support they need to take advantage of those opportunities," **said Lt. Gov. Austin Davis, who leads the Pennsylvania Advisory Council for Inclusive Procurement**. "Our efforts are already bearing fruit, as we recently announced [the Commonwealth increased its spending with Black- and Latino-owned small businesses by about 30 percent](#) during the 2022-23 fiscal year. The Shapiro-Davis Administration is going to keep investing in Pennsylvania small businesses because they are the engine of our economy and the beating heart of our communities."

Summit attendees were introduced to numerous initiatives and programs, led by **DGS's Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion, and Small Business Opportunities (BDISBO)**, that are increasing SB, SDB, and VBE participation in Commonwealth contracting opportunities. These include:

- An initiative to [support Pennsylvania-based small businesses](#) by purchasing more products from them through Amazon Business.
- A Mentor-Protégé Program to [help small businesses compete for Commonwealth contracting opportunities](#).
- Updated Department of State business registration forms, to collect more information and [share that info with DGS if a business qualifies as a small business, small diverse business or veteran business enterprise](#).
- An additional 385 SDBs and VBEs registered for contracting opportunities with the Commonwealth during the 2023 calendar year, marking a 35 percent increase from the number registered during the previous year.
- An expanded Commonwealth definition of a small business to align with the U.S. Small Business Administration's definition and allow more businesses to qualify.
- A prompt pay policy so [subcontractors now must be paid within 10 days](#) after a prime contractor receives payment from the state.
- A reduction in time it takes [for DGS to certify a small business](#).

"These initiatives are not just about meeting numbers; they're about transforming lives and communities," **said DGS Secretary McNeil**. "When we invest in small and diverse businesses,

we invest in the future of Pennsylvania. We're building a more inclusive economy where everyone has a chance to succeed, and this summit is a crucial part of that effort. Our goal is to ensure that these businesses not only survive but thrive, becoming integral parts of our economic fabric. By simplifying processes, enhancing support, and fostering partnerships, we are making it easier for small and diverse businesses to navigate the complexities of government contracting."

The summit's panels featured additional prominent voices, including **Kerry Kirkland, Deputy Secretary of BDISBO**; **Teresa Dennis, State Director for Senator Casey's Office**; **Ian Lawrence, Executive Vice President of the Enterprise Center**; **John Fleming, Regional Administrator at the U.S. Small Business Administration**; and other leaders in procurement and business development. These discussions provided actionable insights into navigating government contracting and leveraging available resources.

"Through our collaborative efforts, we are opening doors that have been closed for far too long," **said Kerry Kirkland, Deputy Secretary of BDISBO**. "Our focus is on creating sustainable opportunities that will benefit small and diverse businesses for generations to come. We're committed to dismantling the barriers that have historically kept these businesses on the sidelines. By providing mentorship, resources, and streamlined processes, we're ensuring that small and diverse businesses have the tools they need to compete and succeed. This summit is just one step in our ongoing journey to create a more equitable and inclusive economic landscape in Pennsylvania."

Governor Shapiro's [Executive Order 2023-18](#) has been instrumental in advancing opportunities for small and diverse businesses, leading to record-breaking investments in SDBs and VBEs. The order also established the **Pennsylvania Advisory Council for Inclusive Procurement (PACIP)**, which meets quarterly to advise on strategies to make state contracting policies and processes more inclusive. Through extensive outreach, including over 70 events and proactive communication with thousands of small business stakeholders since the beginning of the Shapiro-Davis Administration, DGS has reinforced its commitment to fostering an inclusive economic environment for all. Pennsylvania SBs, SDBs, and VBEs can find more information and resources at pa.gov/smalldiversebusiness.

###