

# A GUIDE TO WORKING WITH COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



INFORMATION FOR MINORITY, WOMEN, AND  
LOCAL BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Columbia University has a long-standing commitment to working with minority-owned, women-owned, or locally based (M/W/L) businesses—whether by establishing purchasing relationships with vendors, entering into consulting agreements for services, or contracting for construction, renovation, or repair services. This booklet is designed to provide an overview of what is needed to develop a business relationship with Columbia.

As a large University that receives funding from many sources—including governmental, nonprofit, and private agencies—and as a matter of good business practice, Columbia adheres to the certification and other requirements described below. It is important for businesses new to working with Columbia to understand these requirements in order to make the most of the many contracting opportunities available. University representatives can provide guidance for businesses on how to meet some of these conditions. Contact information is listed at the end of this guide.

## **SOME BASICS**

Doing business with Columbia requires some basic business capacities on the part of vendors. These include Web access and acceptance of credit cards, as well as basic financial reporting and administrative capabilities (such as order tracking and tax information). Regardless of size, any company wishing to do business with Columbia will be required to maintain the appropriate insurance and be prepared to provide high-quality goods and services, timely delivery, and competitive pricing. Additionally, companies must maintain ethical business conduct. This publication discusses the various levels of insurance requirements. For more information on these requirements and resources that may help guide you, contact the appropriate department as listed at the end of this guide.

## **NONCONSTRUCTION VENDORS AND CONSULTANTS**

In Fiscal Year '07, the University spent approximately \$73 million for nonconstruction goods and services in New York City. Some \$16 million of this was spent within the New York Empowerment Zone (the NYEZ is referred to as the University's local community that includes 17 ZIP codes in Harlem, Washington Heights, and Inwood). These dollar amounts do not include the local dollars also spent through secondary relationships with the University's large vendor partners.

### **1. Vendors**

#### **A. Certification**

One of the key steps in being prepared to work with the University is obtaining relevant certifications for your business, including:

- Local business
- Minority-owned business
- Women-owned business
- Small business
- Small disadvantaged business
- Business located in an Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Zone
- Veteran-owned business
- Service disabled, veteran-owned business
- Historically black college or university

Certification is helpful in a variety of ways. Columbia searches databases of certified businesses to identify potential business partners. While not a guarantee that your firm will obtain business, certification can open the door to business with the University.

As part of the registration process with the University, there is the opportunity to provide certification documentation.

Information about certification criteria and the certification process is available at the Small Business Administration's Web site: [www.ccr.gov](http://www.ccr.gov). Information on certification as a minority-owned business is available at [www.nynjmsdc.org](http://www.nynjmsdc.org). Businesses that need to be certified or need assistance with business development are encouraged to contact the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) at [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov).

## **B. Credit Cards**

The University has established a procurement card, or P-Card, for staff in schools and departments to make direct purchases of certain goods and services. To accept the P-Card, your business must be able to accept credit cards as a method of payment.

The University can refer you to service providers who can help you set up systems to accept credit cards. Although, as with any credit card purchase, the credit card company and bank charge a transaction fee, the P-Card has the advantage of simplifying and expediting payment to your firm without additional billing requirements.

## **C. Preferred Vendor Status**

The University has a number of preferred vendors that have University-wide Purchasing Agreements (UwPAs) for goods and services that are used in high volume and where competitive pricing, terms, and conditions have been negotiated. Additionally, UwPAs require a review process, which includes an assessment of capacity, as well as a review of the organization's business plan. Small, medium, and large vendors serve as preferred vendors; multiple vendors are listed and are able to provide the goods or services required. UwPA status allows the various individual schools and departments within Columbia to choose a vendor from a select list to obtain needed goods or services.

#### **D. Strategic Vendor Partnerships**

In addition to the Preferred Vendor Status, the University has established University-wide Strategic Partnership Agreements with several large vendors in a few key areas of high-volume goods and services. In turn, these vendors have agreed to utilize local suppliers when possible to improve local sourcing opportunities. The Strategic Vendor Partners (SVP) hold major contracts with the University, and the individual schools and departments are required to order their goods and services from the SVP. These vendors provide goods and/or services such as:

- Temporary staffing services
- Maintenance, repair, and operating (MRO) supplies
- Office supplies

The Strategic Vendor Partners require a high capacity level from M/W/L vendors, but they also provide mentoring and technical assistance to the M/W/L vendors with which they work.

#### **BORAX PAPER PRODUCTS**

Borax Paper Products, a locally based family business in the Bronx, provides plastic bags, food service products, and janitorial supplies for the University. Borax began doing business with the University in April 2006. Though it began with a small University contract, its contracts have doubled in each of the past two years in large part due to Borax's commitment to flexibility in working with one of the University's large vendor partners, as well as its creativity in providing products that enhance the University's Environmentally Friendly (Green) Initiative.

## **E. Getting Started**

The University asks vendors who would like to do business with Columbia to complete an online vendor questionnaire, available at [www.columbia.edu/cu/purchasing/vendors.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/purchasing/vendors.html). The form asks for basic financial information and details on the goods and services that your business provides.

Construction-related vendors follow a similar qualification process that begins with a firm either completing the process described above or completing a one-page company profile with the Construction Coordination Department. For more information, please see the Construction Contracts section on page 8.

Columbia seeks to buy from local businesses within the New York Empowerment Zone whenever possible. The University maintains a database that helps employees find businesses that meet University requirements.

## **2. Consultant Services**

The various schools and administrative departments at Columbia individually solicit proposals for consultant services, based on a specific Scope of Work. Most consultant services contracted for more than \$25,000 require that the Purchasing Department solicit three written proposals/bids. Once the consultant is selected, the school or department will work with the consultant to complete a contract, which includes a Scope of Work and negotiated business/legal terms in accordance with Columbia's Purchasing Guidelines, available at [www.columbia.edu/purchasing](http://www.columbia.edu/purchasing). Once the contract is complete, the Purchasing Department will issue a Purchase Order, which permits the service provider to begin performing the contracted services. The Purchase Order is required in order to make payment(s), once an invoice is received, to the consultant following the successful performance of the contracted services.

<b>INSURANCE TYPE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>General Liability</b>	Commercial General Liability is broad based insurance that covers the liability assumed in the performance of the general, nonprofessional activities of many businesses.
<b>Professional Liability</b>	Certain types of contractors/vendors perform activities that are highly specialized professional services and are not fully covered under a Commercial General Liability Policy. These contractors/vendors might be required to carry Professional/Errors and Omissions Liability Insurance.
<b>Workers Compensation</b>	Workers Compensation covers an employer’s statutory financial obligation to pay the costs associated with an employee’s medical treatment and time away from work due to a work-related injury or illness. By state statute, with very limited exceptions, all businesses with employees are required to either purchase workers compensation coverage or become an authorized self-insurer.
<b>Automobile Liability</b>	Business Automobile Liability insurance covers the liabilities assumed by a business when the type of motor vehicles required to be licensed for operation on public roads are used in the course of their business activities. In situations where the contracting party will be using motor vehicles to perform operations or provide services on Columbia-owned property, the contracting party should be required to carry Business Automobile Liability insurance.

As stated under basic requirements, a consultant must obtain some insurance, usually in the form of General Liability and/or Professional Liability. The requirements are based on assessments of risk related to the work and are in place to protect both the consultant and the University. Cost of insurance coverage can vary and is determined by a number of factors, such as type of business, financial position, and related legal issues.

The table at left describes the types of insurance that can be required of a nonconstruction vendor or consultant doing business with the University. Coverage levels, when required, range from \$1 million to \$2 million. Vendors are responsible for obtaining and providing proof of insurance in the form of a Certificate of Insurance. The University does not make recommendations regarding insurance brokers but can provide a referral guide if the M/W/L enterprise needs a listing of insurance brokers to contact for more information.

## **CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS**

Between 2002 and 2005, the University's M/W/L participation rate for large-scale projects on the Morningside campus exceeded 36 percent and M/W/L labor force participation was 44 percent. In fiscal years 2006 and 2007, Columbia contracted for more than \$127 million in construction and repair and maintenance services with M/W/L firms representing more than one-third of its construction and repair and maintenance spending.

Columbia University has set a goal of awarding at least 25 percent of all contracts to M/W/L firms. The University accomplishes this through both prime and subcontracting opportunities. Additionally, in 2007 Columbia joined with the Mayor's Commission on Construction Opportunities to ensure that we continue our efforts to support the growth of M/W/L businesses in New York.

### **Prime and Sub Construction Contracts**

Columbia University actively encourages participation of M/W/L construction firms in University construction projects. Between 1996 and 2005, the University awarded nearly \$180 million in projects to M/W/L construction firms.

The University continues to build on this record and encourages all construction businesses that are certified by a governmental or quasi-governmental entity as minority- and women-owned to become qualified by Columbia to bid on our construction projects. The Office of Construction Coordination, established to ensure the robust participation of M/W/L firms on all construction projects, works with many M/W/L organizations. The University also ensures that its construction managers understand the importance of increasing M/W/L participation.

#### **A. Qualification at Columbia**

Any construction-related firm wishing to bid on a project at Columbia must *first* complete a qualification process at the University. The process, generally, involves the completion of

an online application. This online application is available at: [www.columbia.edu/purchasing/qualification](http://www.columbia.edu/purchasing/qualification).

The University's Purchasing Department and University-wide Vendor Subcommittee review completed applications with an emphasis on trade areas, historic trade spending, and M/W/L gap analysis to promote M/W/L representation in every trade area. An applicant who meets these standards is asked to present its qualifications to the Vendor Subcommittee, which votes on firm qualification following the presentation.

## **B. Insurance Requirements**

All businesses engaged in construction-related consulting services, including architects and engineers performing work in connection with an existing or planned structure, must meet University insurance requirements. The requirements generally are as follows:

- General Commercial Liability insurance (minimum per occurrence), generally: \$5 million
- Automobile Liability insurance (minimum per occurrence), where applicable: \$2 million
- Professional Liability insurance: \$2 million

## **C. Bids**

Columbia utilizes a selective bidding process to seek bids on its construction projects. The University generally contacts a minimum of three companies per project to solicit bids. Each firm selected on a bid must be qualified as a Columbia University vendor prior to being included on a direct bid contract.

## **D. Technical Assistance**

To help expand opportunities for contractors doing business with the University, Columbia is developing a multifaceted technical assistance program for qualified University contractors. If you are interested in learning more about this program when it is launched, please call 212-854-2595.

## **SPECIAL MENTORING PROGRAM**

On January 10, 2008, Columbia University and the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) launched a mentorship program to help minority, women-owned, and local businesses build capacity and earn contracting opportunities at the University.

Twenty-two businesses, currently certified with the city as minority or woman-owned, are participating in the one-year pilot program, which includes a series of courses about managing the full project life cycle. Upon completion of the first set of courses, Columbia will designate a series of University projects on which the participants will bid, with guidance in bidding and meeting contract requirements.

### **IDEAL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**

A little over five years ago, Ricardo Rivera, President and Founder of Ideal Construction, walked the two blocks from his office to Columbia University. His only goal was to find out how his company could partner with Columbia.

In 2006, Ideal won the prestigious Regional Alliance “Contractor of the Year Award.” Rivera credits Columbia’s mentoring with helping him to achieve his success. Starting with small contracts, Rivera’s “can do” attitude helped create a working partnership with Columbia that allowed his business to grow.

Today, staff at Ideal Construction point to Rivera’s walk as a “defining moment” for the business.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT COLUMBIA

Columbia is the seventh largest nongovernmental employer in the City of New York. More than two-thirds of the University's 14,000 employees live in the five boroughs. Nearly 30 percent of the University's non-faculty staff live in Upper Manhattan. Offering a variety of jobs with competitive benefits to a diversity of local residents is central to achieving the University's mission of teaching, research, public service, and patient care.

Interested applicants may search current openings and find out more about the application process by visiting <https://jobs.columbia.edu> or stopping by the Employment Information Center located at 3180 Broadway, just south of 125th Street. The center's staff is available to answer questions and provide guidance on the application process, which can be completed during a first visit. The center is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Columbia actively recruits in the local area to find qualified people to fill a variety of jobs at all levels of the University.

### **YVETTE RHEA-BURG**

Yvette has worked at Columbia for more than eight years. Born and raised in Harlem, she started as a Health Services Assistant and now leads the support team.

More than two-thirds of Columbia's 14,000 employees live within the five boroughs. Yvette exemplifies the kind of opportunity a hard-working, dedicated employee can find at Columbia.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Vendors and consultants interested in learning more about opportunities for nonconstruction or consulting-related services are invited to contact:

D. Sean Johnson, Manager, Small Business Compliance and Vendor Outreach, Procurement Services, 212-854-2335 or via e-mail at [dj223@columbia.edu](mailto:dj223@columbia.edu).

Or visit the Purchasing Web site at [www.columbia.edu/purchasing](http://www.columbia.edu/purchasing).

M/W/L construction-related firms interested in learning more about opportunities at Columbia are invited to contact:

Sheena Jones, Project Coordinator, Construction Business Services and Communications, Columbia University Facilities, at 212-854-6599 or via e-mail at [projx@columbia.edu](mailto:projx@columbia.edu).

To learn more about employment opportunities, individuals may visit the Employment Information Center at 3180 Broadway (just south of 125th Street). The hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Interested individuals may also call 212-851-1551 or visit the Web at [www.hr.columbia.edu/hr/jobs/ceic/ceic/](http://www.hr.columbia.edu/hr/jobs/ceic/ceic/).