

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual MARKETPLACE Wisconsin convention took place in downtown Milwaukee from Dec. 6-7, 2023 at the Baird Center. Presented by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), MARKETPLACE is the Governor's Annual Conference on Diverse Business Development.

With a focus on small and diverse businesses, this event connected business owners from across Wisconsin with state, federal, and local government as well as private sector business opportunities. The conference also provided a chance for businesses owned by minorities, women, veterans, LGBTQ+, and people with disabilities to learn from and connect with resource providers, government representatives, corporate buyers, and business professionals.

Several partner events featured alongside Marketplace the Tribal – Native Awards Dinner (Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>), The Contracting Academy (Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>), a Tribal Native Opportunities session (Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>), and a Business Roundtable with Department of Defense Office of Small Business Programs (Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>).

December 6<sup>th</sup> saw the Business and Economic Opportunities Sessions at Marketplace, including presentations by the City of Milwaukee on upcoming RNC opportunities and the Green Bay Packers on upcoming NFL draft opportunities, as well as annual updates from the WI Department of Administration, US Small Business Administration and Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). There was also an educational session on “Building Capacity in Current and Aspiring DBE MBE WBE Sub-Contractors.”

December 7<sup>th</sup> included the General Session / Breakfast Business Panel, the Governor's Awards Luncheon, and Buyer Meetings at which small businesses could meet face to face with over 40 contract buyers from federal, state, local government agencies as well as prime contractors, to exchange business cards, capabilities statements and a handshake, thereby creating a personal introduction with these people, considered by small business experts to be a much better first impression than just an email or phone call. 635 buyers meetings were documented during the event.

December 7<sup>th</sup> also included more educational panel discussion sessions, including:

- *Going Global: Building the Fundamentals, From Business Development to Compliance to Finance.*
- *Unlocking the Power of E-Commerce: Ideas for Online Success*
- *Leveraging Certifications for Small and Diverse Businesses*
- *Going Global: WI Small Business Development Center, A Case Study with Carefree Enzymes*
- *Financial Resources Supporting Diverse Businesses*
- *Maximizing Success with Entrepreneurs of Color in Your Community*
- *Going Global: What you need to know when selling internationally*
- *WiDEN Your Possibilities! & SizeUpWI*
- *Mentoring – Critical for Personal and Business Growth and Development*

More than 100 exhibitors filled the Exhibit Hall at the Baird Center, with most of them being diverse small business owners. Additional information can be found at [www.marketplacewisconsin.com](http://www.marketplacewisconsin.com)



Looking for assistance in entering or growing your government sales - locating government opportunities, building a capabilities statement, certifications, technical training, compliance, developing a government market strategy, contact WPI at [apexaccelerator@wispro.org](mailto:apexaccelerator@wispro.org) or call 414-270-3600.

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