

How to get major Philadelphia institutions to buy from your local business

By [Kennedy Rose](#) – Reporter, Philadelphia Business Journal

Major Philadelphia-area institutions have \$5 billion annually in procurement expenses, and a new analysis identifies how more of it can be spent with local businesses.

The [report](#) from the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia found that nine of the city's anchor institutions use more than 1,400 Philadelphia-based suppliers, but only about 150 of those suppliers sell to more than three of those institutions. To move more institutional spending to local businesses, the Economy League, the city of Philadelphia and these institutions formed Philadelphia Anchors for Growth & Equity, or PAGE, in 2015. The group aims to shift \$500 million in contracts to local businesses.

The latest report found that 78% of the money those anchor institutions spend with local vendors is spent with construction companies, and most suppliers were clustered around Center City and University City. The ZIP code containing the most local suppliers (nearly 15%) is 19103.

The following anchor institutions participated in the analysis:

- Community College of Philadelphia
- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
- Drexel University
- Penn Medicine
- Temple University
- Temple University Health System
- Thomas Jefferson University and Health System
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of the Sciences

James Doorcheck Inc. and Paul Rabinowitz Glass Co. are the most commonly used suppliers, as they have worked with eight of the nine anchors, the report found.

Procurement experts from several Philadelphia institutions spoke on a panel about how businesses can best prepare to get contracts from local entities at the annual PAGE Summit at Temple University last week.

Here are some things local businesses do to better compete for local contracts:

Build your network

Pat [Alexander Sanford](#), CEO of Alexander Perry Inc., said it takes a village to build a business. The support systems she had through Philadelphia's Enterprise Center early in her career for business training, to other organizations later on, helped her build her business to what it is today. Some of those connections helped her get major jobs, she said.

Alexander Perry Inc. has done work for Temple University, Wills Eye Hospital, the Comcast Technology Center and more.

Businesses should look at their customer segment so they can join associations related to the industry they're in, but they can also join larger business organizations such as the Eastern Minority Supplier Development Council, [Alexander Sanford](#) said.

"All of that was all about getting out there, putting yourself out there and networking with a bunch of people," [Alexander Sanford](#) said. "I don't want to say it was easy, but I want to say that if you are focused and targeted, you'll get where you want to be."

Come prepared

Tomas Sanchez, director of business procurement for the Office of Institutional Diversity at Temple University, suggests that businesses come prepared with their forms filled out completely.

"When we go back and ask you for more information, that's a red flag," Sanchez said.

Coming prepared doesn't only mean having your forms filled out. You also must be prepared to compete with a vendor who has been doing business with an institution for years, Sanchez said. Knowing how the institution operates and what they're looking for from a vendor is important, as is knowing who your competition is, he said.

Know if it's a fit

Getting a contract is a great opportunity, but there is a possibility that the job may not be true to the service or product you're selling, said [Nestor Torres](#), managing partner at Myriagon Consulting Group and board member of the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Knowing your capacity to complete a project and offering the same quality from the first unit to the last is imperative before taking on an opportunity with an institution, he said.

A business' image is also important, Torres said. How a business is presented in its marketing, documents, contractual obligations, proposals and more matters because people make decisions based on what they see, he said.