



SAME conference

Event offers opportunities for small businesses to network

The Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) San Antonio Post held its annual Small Business Conference July 29 and 30 in San Antonio. This event provided small businesses the opportunity to dialogue and network with executives from area federal and city government organizations and key business leaders from large private-sector firms.

More than 250 people attended this year's event, which demonstrated the importance and significance of small businesses in the federal and city government contracting environment. The success of this annual event is due in part to the San Antonio Post Small Business Committee and co-sponsors: Booz-Allen-Hamilton, CH2M Hill, Dynamac, Earth Tech-AECOM, EQM, Jacobs, MWH, PBS&J, Shaw, Tetra Tech and Tol Test.

The conference was designed to attract area small and emerging small businesses. Registration was reduced from \$150 to \$125 for small businesses, with costs for their tuition offset by other sponsorship and registration fees. This initiative was very successful, with more than 60 percent of the tabletop displays and individual registrations coming from small businesses.

The conference attracted speakers from local federal government organizations such as the Air Force Center for Engi-



Estella Calvillo, a Small Business Specialist from Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, meets with an attendee during the one-on-one sessions at the Society of American Military Engineers Small Business Conference in San Antonio.

neering and the Environment (AFCEE), Air Education and Training Command (AETC), the Air Force Small Business Solutions Center (AFSBSC), Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) from Fort Worth and Kansas City, and the City of San Antonio.

The conference contained three tracks that included business forecasts from San Antonio-area federal and city government agencies, training sessions for small businesses, and one-on-one sessions with government agencies and prime contractors.

Glen Turney, San Antonio Post president, opened the conference and welcomed attendees. Dennis Firman, director of AFCEE

and keynote speaker, shared his insight into the importance of small business partnerships and AFCEE's role in using small businesses.

Mary Urey, event organizer and director of the Small Business Office at Brooks City-Base and AFCEE, led a series of morning business forecast speakers that included representatives from AFCEE, 711th Human Performance Wing, 77th Aeronautical Systems Group, Air Force Research Laboratory, AFSBSC and Brooks Development Authority.

Col. Richard Fryer, commander of the Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency (AFCESA) provided a detailed business opportunities forecast for AFCESA

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and the role of small businesses in supporting its program. Attendees were offered information regarding future opportunities for small businesses and how to obtain small business contracts with these organizations.

Day One's afternoon included three four-hour tracks each providing attendees with professional development hours. The first track was devoted to teaming including legal foundations of teaming and joint ventures presented by Cyrus Rea of the law firm Hargrove and Rea, San Antonio Post members. A second track was developed in conjunction with AFCEE and the Brooks City-Base Small Business Office to conduct a dialogue between small businesses and AFCEE program managers on the topic of performance-based contracting.

The last track provided significant opportunity for emerging small businesses to interact with successful small businesses and each other, discussing problems and issues associated with growth of their businesses and the development of potential solutions. A facilitated session provided an opportunity to brainstorm with successful firms and consultants. The emerging small businesses who attended this facilitated workshop took away a toolbox of solutions to implement in their business plans and a network of informal mentors willing to assist in the future.

Day Two offered briefings and training, including: an update by the USACE Fort Worth/AFCEE Joint Program Office; the fundamentals of bonding; and presentations by the City of San Antonio, AETC, DeCA, Air Force Mentor-Protégé program and San Antonio Water System.

Col. Kurt Stonerock, provisional commander of the first



Attendees and sponsors of the SAME Small Business Conference view table-top displays (above) and network during one-on-one sessions (left). The event was held at the Marriott Northwest in San Antonio July 29 and 30.

Air Force Regional Contracting Center at Randolph Air Force Base, opened the afternoon with an overview of Installation Acquisition Transformation (IAT) and its implications for small business. Additional information on IAT was provided by Dave Dentino, AETC/A7C, and Renee Wesley-Case, AFSBSC director. These presentations provided an opportunity for small businesses to better position themselves to compete in the Air Force IAT process.

Urey and Eileen King, Chief, DeCA Contracting Branch, USACE Kansas City, planned and organized one-on-one sessions where attendees were given the opportunity to schedule time with government agency representatives and prime contractors

to establish contacts to facilitate future business partnerships.

This speed-dating type setup gave participants an agency representative's full attention to learn best practices for doing business with their organization. More than 330 one-on-one meetings were conducted. Conference feedback highlighted these one-on-one sessions as one of the most important aspects of the conference.

Small businesses and small business partnerships continue to be a vital part of the multi-billion dollar federal government contracting environment. The SAME San Antonio Post Small Business Conference is a testament to how organizations are working together to promote the importance of small businesses.