

Chamber's MN Supplier Match Aims to Boost B2B Sales

Resource: Finance & Commerce, Todd Nelson

Minnesota companies hoping to sell or buy more goods and services locally have a new way to connect with one another at [MN Supplier Match](#), an online business-to-business database recently launched by the [Minnesota Chamber of Commerce](#).

The chamber began working on the database about 18 months ago, said Sean O'Neil, business development coordinator at the chamber.

Some of the chamber's more than 2,300 members wanted "something more systematic and accessible" to search for in-state suppliers, O'Neil said.

"We're hoping it's a tool that allows for that more organic way of finding suppliers in your own backyard," O'Neil said. "A lot of companies want to find suppliers closer to home."

MN Supplier Match could help some of the state's smaller companies get on the radar of some of its biggest.

"We have been working with some of the state's largest Fortune 500 companies to help them expand their local supply chain," Vicki Stute, the chamber's vice president of programs and service, said in a statement.

Sourcing from local suppliers offers advantages including "customization, accessibility, rapid delivery, shared networks and trusted quality," Stute said. "And (the database) creates value for the Minnesota economy by keeping more dollars in the state and making our suppliers and buyers more competitive."

More than 460 businesses were registered for MN Supplier Match when it launched in January, O'Neil said. The chamber's goal is to have more than 1,000 businesses in the database by year's end.

Buyers seeking to access the database must be chamber members, O'Neil said. The cost of a chamber membership starts at \$695 and is based on the number of employees a company has in Minnesota.

Suppliers on MN Supplier Match must be chamber members or must have had a visit from Grow Minnesota!, the chamber's business retention and assistance program, O'Neil said.

More than 7,000 businesses statewide have had such visits during the past 15 years, O'Neil said. The visits are from the chamber or one of more than 70 local chambers and economic development organizations. The company visits help assess business conditions in the state by tracking issues related to workforce, innovation, exports and capital investment plans.

Registered companies can search the database by keyword or one of 60 preset product and service categories, O'Neil said. Users can filter results by criteria including a company's location, the industries it serves, and whether it is a business owned by minorities, women or veterans.

Kevin McKinnon, deputy commissioner of economic development at the [Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development](#), said small manufacturers in the state may be among those who benefit from MN Supplier Match.

"We have an incredible and diverse manufacturing base here in our state," said McKinnon, who has worked closely with the Grow Minnesota! program. "A lot of our companies — and particularly a lot of our small companies — have significant capacity and ability to serve a variety of industries."

Bret Weiss, president and CEO of Golden Valley-based WSB & Associates, already has registered WSB on MN Supplier Match. The professional consulting and design firm offers engineering, planning, environmental and construction services to government, energy and commercial clients.

"The stronger we make the state of Minnesota by working together and having a strong economy here with money and profits that are left inside of Minnesota, the better it is for all of us," Weiss said.

While WSB works across the country, Weiss said he hopes the database will lead to new local opportunities for the firm. At the same time the chamber member said he will use it to find other chamber members to do business with on future projects, including some upcoming marketing needs.

Kris Palestini, owner of Roseville-based Minnesota Industrial Battery, is another chamber member registered with MN Supplier Match. Minnesota Industrial Battery sells, services and maintains batteries for forklifts and lift trucks in Minnesota and surrounding states, Palestini said.

Palestrini bought the company 18 months ago from his father-in-law Gene Slattum, who founded it in 1982.

"I'm hoping we get some phone calls and some interest from it," Palestini said.

"Sometimes it just takes a click or two to get recognition and an opportunity."