

SDPBC Goods & Services Summit: Fostering Mentorship, Building Connections, and Driving Growth

On November 13, 2024, the School District of Palm Beach County (SDPBC) held its Goods & Services Summit, bringing together small business owners, SCORE mentors, and SDPBC Purchasing leaders to unveil a wide range of contracting opportunities, support local entrepreneurship, and provide strategic insights for overcoming business challenges.

The event began with a panel discussion moderated by Maricel De Leon, Manager of Training, Events & Outreach from the Office of Diversity in Business Practices (ODBP). De Leon facilitated a conversation with SCORE mentors, who shared insights into overcoming business challenges and navigating entrepreneurial landscapes.

Key Highlights of the Summit:

- **SCORE Mentorship:** The event showcased SCORE, a nationwide, no-cost mentoring program for small business owners. SCORE offers free resources including webinars, online presentations, and personalized mentoring. Interested businesses can access these resources at SCORE.org.
- **Purchasing Platform Update:** SDPBC announced a significant change in its bidding process. Starting January 1, 2025, all bids will be submitted through BidNet Direct, providing a streamlined approach for potential vendors.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Attendees engaged in one-on-one meetings with purchasing agents to explore potential contract opportunities. SCORE mentors conducted "speed mentoring" sessions, offering quick, targeted advice to participants.
- **Business Certification Insights:** Lina A. Lacy, Business Compliance Specialist, and Timothy Kimball, Business Analyst, provided guidance on certification processes and profile optimization to maximize business opportunities.
- **Student Involvement:** The summit included students from local high schools, including Park Vista, Royal Palm, Palm Beach Gardens, and Spanish River High Schools, introducing young entrepreneurs to business networking.

Sponsors:

- **CIBC:** Sponsored lunch and discussed financial options for businesses
- **Med Aide Services:** Provided breakfast
- **CRL Media:** Sponsored raffle prizes and encouraged business certification

The summit successfully created a supportive environment for small businesses, fostering learning, growth, and potential opportunities within the School District of Palm Beach County.