



**TENNESSEE MULTICULTURAL
CHAMBER of COMMERCE, INC.**

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Ms. Judy Walton, Reporter
Chattanooga Times Free Press
400 East 11th Street
Chattanooga, TN 37401

Dear Ms. Walton:

I have reviewed the information you faxed to me yesterday which consisted of a City three year projection sheet and a copy of the Program Beneficiary Statistics for the City of Chattanooga. The budget processes for the City of Chattanooga and Hamilton County are not due at the same time. For instance, the City of Chattanooga's budget request forms were due February 3, 2011, which was quite a bit early this year and a shorter turnaround time. With that in mind, agencies that operate on the same fiscal year as the City and County barely had six months of revenue and expense data available to assist them in preparing the 2011-2012 budgets. On the other hand, the County budgets were not due until March 31, 2011 and we adjusted some line items in the county budget to reflect what was a better forecast and utilization of funds.

Ms. Walton, at the end of the day the budget amounts submitted to the City on February 3, 2011 and the County budget submitted on March 31, 2011 were exactly the same amount for revenues and expenses totaling \$467,840. The Tennessee Multicultural Chamber of Commerce decreased some line items and increased others to reflect our needs for the coming year.

You questioned why the Program Beneficiary Statistics for the City and County were different. The TMCC had more time to review the numbers as they relate to our stakeholders needs. Prior to the budget cut from the City we had more outreach activities. However, trying to meet those same goals with two people was going to be very difficult. We did not anticipate having any interns this year to help us coordinate the programs. In the past, we have teamed with several churches and non-profits to conduct a Youth Entrepreneurial Program. However, by March we knew the resources for the materials would not be available.

Ms. Walton, I cannot debate what some non-profits do or not do as it relates to their statistical data and how they prepare their reports. Therefore, I cannot address the issue.

Your last comment is quoted, "I notice that the combined cost of operating and staffing the TMCC office is roughly \$350,000 per year, while the budget for programs (meetings, marketing, printing and the banquet) is less than \$36,000. I'd like your statement about why the level of program services justifies the cost of keeping the TMCC going as a functioning entity." Ms. Walton, \$233 million in contracts have been awarded to small emerging businesses because of this organization.

The TMCC works with public and private agencies that need to reach contractors, janitorial companies, engineers, architects, realtors, lawyers, insurance agents, lawn care service, exterminating companies and numerous companies that provide goods and services. We connect the City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County Government, Chattanooga Housing Authority, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Erlanger Health System, Memorial Hospital, the Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport and a multitude of agencies, not just in our city; this includes the state and regional areas. They call the TMCC looking for companies that can meet their needs. There is no other place to call. The TMCC spends countless hours working with small emerging businesses to make them aware of new opportunities; to prepare business plans, marketing plans, loan preparation, DBE Certifications, "How to do Business Seminars" and other assistance as needed.

Everyone has a right to their opinion, but as a reporter I would not let my own limited amount of information cause me to decide whether an agency should receive assistance. As these small emerging businesses are successful it puts more money back in the City and County via property taxes and sales of goods and services. We often forget that ninety percent of the businesses driving this economy are small emerging businesses. They want access to information and services one-on-one so they can build a relationship with medium and large companies.

We hope you find the time to get to know us. Attached to this letter is a document that which should address any other questions regarding the organization and what makes the TMCC a great investment.

Regards,



Sherrie Gilchrist
President/CEO

The Tennessee Multicultural Chamber of Commerce

What Makes Us A Successful Investment?

The Tennessee Multicultural Chamber of Commerce (TMCC) believes Economic Diversity is not something that occurs naturally or overnight. It is the dedicated effort to include all people and business into our rich economic tapestry. It is important for us all to go the extra mile whenever possible so that everyone may have a fair chance to make an impact in our community and nation. When we empower the lease of us, we strengthen all of us!

Therefore, when we invest time and resources into small emerging businesses -- neighborhoods grow, communities come alive and young people are employed. Each year a small emerging business is successful, more businesses move in – removing boarded up buildings and blighted areas.

Economic Development has to be won on more than one front. We believe strengthening our small emerging, minority, women and veteran businesses is an important way to ensure sustainable growth for our economy.

Based on these beliefs we have structured the TMCC to identify the needs of our small emerging businesses, provide the services, and create opportunities to sustain and grow minority, women and veteran owned business. Below are some of the services we provide under the leadership of the President/CEO.

1. Small, Minority and Women on Business Certification

The TMCC has created a partnership with the State of Tennessee "Go DBE" program to assist small, minority and women owned businesses to complete the certification process locally. The TMCC provides Technical Assistance to small, minority and women owned businesses with completing the application process; thereby increasing the number of Certified small, Minority and Women Owned business in our community. This is a requirement for Title VI. Without the certification designation there no way of knowing for sure you are meeting the federal mandates for using federal dollars.

Chattanooga was the only city that did not have someone locally to assist businesses in being certified and it is a very tedious process and the Nashville budget cuts made it almost impossible for them to travel here to conduct the certification, local businesses complained about the amount of time to be certified, and applications being filed inappropriately. The Certification services are FREE of charge.

2. How to do Business with Public and Private Partners:

The TMCC has found these workshops most helpful for small emerging businesses in our community. The City of Chattanooga, Hamilton County Government, TVA, UTC, BCBST, EPB, Erlanger, Memorial, Volkswagen and a multitude of other agencies have benefited from meeting with small emerging businesses to discuss their procurement process, timelines to help prepare companies to successfully do business with their company.

All of these meetings are FREE to anyone who is interested in providing goods/services to these public and private companies/agencies.

3. Public and Private Agencies seeking to do business with small, minority, women and veteran owned businesses:

We are the conduit for getting this information out to small emerging businesses that can provide these services. The TMCC does this via the phone and through our Weekly TMCC Eblast (Exhibit)

4. All small emerging business can obtain assistance in the following areas at no cost:

- A. Business Plan Development
- B. Loan Preparation
- C. DBE Certification
- D. Marketing
- E. Business Location Analysis
- F. State/Local incentives
- G. Construction Plans – are made available from area architectural. Small emerging business needed access to the plans to submit bids for local projects. However, we found that many of these small contractors could not afford the \$5000 plus fees at local Dodge Rooms. The TMCC solved the problem by making the plans available at our office.

5. Martin Luther King Revitalization:

The TMCC is investing more than half million dollars in the 400 block of Martin Luther King Boulevard. These are grants to assist us in providing affordable office space to small emerging businesses that require technical assistance, retail shops, and other commercial enterprises. Our grants are matching funds to show the city and county's support of the organization. In order to receive additional grants currently being requested we need the matching funds from the City and County as it current level.

6. Soul of Chattanooga – created to assist visitors to find goods and services unique to Chattanooga/Hamilton County:

The Soul of Chattanooga was created as a guide for tourist to experience goods and services of small emerging businesses. It provides visitors with information on local attractions, historical places, churches, realtors, hair and nail salons, restaurants, retail shops, caterers,

photographers, attorneys, bail bondsman and so much more. The booklets are distributed to all hotels, convention and visitor bureau and major attraction areas. The brochure is a great success for small, minority, women and veteran owned businesses who otherwise could not pay to market their goods and services at all attractions and hotels. Visitors know we have more than just great malls. We have a hometown culture that is unique and they need to buy and experience all that Chattanooga has to offer.