

Focus Groups on Minority-Owned Business Growth, Opportunities and Barriers to Global Commerce

Questions to be Addressed by Focus Groups

A. Enablers of Growth – Revenue Growth

- Describe the background and expertise of the management team
- What is the governance structure? Who/what are the sources of advice? To whom does the MBE go to for help?
- What types of certification has the MBE secured? What role has certification played in enabling growth for the MBE?
- What are the MBE's growth drivers?
- What has been the MBE's rate of growth overtime? What has driven any rapid upturns in growth?
- How does the MBE access the market for growth? Share examples of how the MBE has differentiated its products/services within the market
- What are the key components of the funding strategy?
- What is the MBE's bonding capacity?
- What are the key elements of the strategic plan? What is the time horizon for the strategic plan? 1 year? 3 years? 5 years?
- How does the MBE develop its strategic plans? Describe the approach taken to collect commercial/market data? What kind of market data have you found to be most effective to direct your marketing strategy (e.g., pricing)?
- What governmental programs – either federal, state or local – have been critical to the MBE's growth?
- What are the barriers to knowledge transfer (e.g., IP protection, patents)?
- Describe the MBE's experience in structuring and using strategic alliances for promoting growth – revenue growth. Describe the type of strategic alliance(s)
- What percentage (%) of revenues results from the strategic alliance(s)?
- Describe the MBE's experience in leveraging, and participating in supplier forums? Which supplier forums has the MBE found to be most effective? What topics addressed within supplier forums have been the most meaningful?
- How can strategic alliances help the MBE achieve greater growth?
- How can a supplier forum help the MBE achieve greater growth? What topics would be most meaningful, such as access to capital or globalization of one's business?
- Who are your mentors?
- If available, what would the MBE do with the additional capital?

B. Barriers to Growth – Revenue Growth

- What are the key barriers to growth for the MBE community at large?
- Based on the MBE's specific experiences, what have been, or what are the key barriers to successful execution of its strategic plan?
- Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the background and expertise of the

MBE's management team?

- Based on the certification status of the MBE, to what extent has certification served as an enabler or barrier to growth?
- To what extent does being a minority (woman, African American, Hispanic, Native American or Asian American) serve as an enabler or barrier to growth?
- How does the MBE allocate funding for both short-term and long-term investments?
- To what extent has inadequate credit been a barrier to growth?
- How much ownership would you be willing to forego for credit?
- To what extent has cash flow been a barrier to growth?
- To what extent has the MBE been constrained by the ability to find highly qualified talent, and/or access to engineering talent?
- What are the regulatory constraints that exist on the MBE's operations? Consider any potential federal, state and local constraints
- Describe the MBE's successes and challenges in accessing the market, and differentiating its products/services within the market
- How do you develop new products?
- How do you access the right talent (e.g., engineering talent)?
- What is the MBE's history in using strategic alliances?
- How can strategic alliances help address the barriers to growth?
- How can a supplier forum help address the barriers to growth?
- What other strategies can help address the barriers to growth?
- What governmental programs – either federal, state or local – would be helpful to address barriers to revenue growth?
- What would be the three uses of capital if available to the MBE today?

C. Enablers of Growth – Export Growth

- Describe the background and expertise of the management team in exporting
- To what extent have pre-existing relations (e.g., familial), connections in the given location(s), language skills, and knowledge of the given location's culture enabled the MBE's exporting?
- What are the primary destinations for your exports?
- What % of revenues does exporting represent?
- What are the MBE's sources of growth beyond exporting?
- How does the MBE's current % of export revenues compare to the revenue sources outlined in its strategic plan? Based on its strategic plan, how is the % of export revenue expected to change over time?
- What has been the rate of growth in exporting overtime? What has driven any rapid upturns in export growth?
- What are the critical elements of a strategic plan for exporting? What commercial/market data has the MBE used to assess/size the MBE's opportunity for exporting and to define its marketing strategy (e.g., pricing)?
- What certification types have proven helpful to the MBE's exporting?
- What are the key enablers of export growth for the MBE? To what extent have the MBE's credit scores been an enabler of growth?
- How have governmental programs – either federal, state or local – helped to

- enable the MBE's growth in exporting?
- How has the MBE addressed knowledge transfer, in terms of IP protection, patents?
- Describe the MBE's experience in structuring and using strategic alliances for promoting export growth.
- To what extent has the strategic alliance(s) driven actual export revenues?
- How has the MBE's participation in supplier forums helped to promote export growth? Which supplier forums has the MBE found to be most effective? What topics related to exporting were the most meaningful?
- How can strategic alliances help the MBE achieve greater export growth?
- How can a supplier forum help the MBE achieve greater export growth? What topics related to exporting would be the most meaningful?
- If additional capital was available today, describe the return on the investment of this capital

D. Barriers to Growth – Export Growth

- What are the key barriers to export for the MBE community at large?
- Based on the MBE's specific experiences, what have been, or what are the key barriers to export growth?
- What is the growth rate of export revenue, compared to the overall revenue growth rate of the MBE over the past 1 year, 3 years and 5 years?
- Describe both the one-time costs to start exporting, and the on-going costs
- What trade-offs has the MBE made to initiate and support exporting? To what extent have you considered and/or given up ownership for credit?
- What have been the sources of advice used to help MBE with exporting?
- Based on the certification status of the MBE, to what extent has its certification served as an enabler or barrier to export growth?
- How does the MBE allocate funding for both short-term and long-term investments?
- To what extent has inadequate credit prevented the MBE from exporting and/or limited export growth?
- To what extent have regulatory constraints – either federal, state or local – prevented the MBE from exporting and/or limited export growth?
- To what extent does being a minority (woman, African American, Hispanic, Native American or Asian American) help or limit the MBE's ability to export?
- What is the MBE's history in using strategic alliances for the purpose of supporting exporting?
- How can strategic alliances help address the barriers to exporting, and increasing export growth?
- How can a supplier forum help address the barriers to exporting, and increasing export growth?
- How can governmental programs – either federal, state, or local – help to address barriers to export growth?
- If available, how would the MBE use capital to address the barriers to

exporting?

E. Strategic Alliances – A Mechanism for Promoting Growth and Competitiveness

- What are the types of strategic alliances with which the MBE has had experience?
- Describe the MBE's experience with strategic alliances involving MBE to Supplier (with the Supplier also being a MBE)
- Describe the MBE's experience with strategic alliances involving MBE to Buyer (with the Buyer also being a MBE)
- What has been the average duration of the strategic alliance(s)?
- What have been the benefits of the strategic alliance(s)? To what extent have there been mutual benefits to both parties?
- What have been the drawbacks of the strategic alliance(s)?
- What are the most effective types of strategic alliances to promote growth – both in terms of revenue and exports?
- What are the critical success factors for a mutually beneficial strategic alliance?
- What roles can supplier forums play in helping to establish effective strategic alliances for, and amongst MBEs?
- What existing supplier forums are effective in establishing effective strategic alliances for, and amongst MBEs today?

F. Exploration and Validation of Synthesized Focus Group Outcomes

Based on the outcomes of the preceding focus groups, this session will seek to:

- Validate the quantitative and qualitative attributes that positively influence growth, both in terms of revenue growth and exports
- Address any conflicting perspectives pertaining to either quantitative or qualitative attributes positively influencing growth
- Validate the constraints and/or barriers to growth, both in terms of revenue growth and exports
- Address any conflicting perspectives pertaining to constraints and/or barriers to growth
- Validate type(s) of strategic alliances that will be most effective in promoting growth – both in terms of revenue growth and exports
- Validate scope and structure of a supplier forum that will be most effective in promoting growth – both in terms of revenue growth and exports
- Validate existing supplier forum(s) that are effective in promoting growth – both in terms of revenue growth and exports