House Subcommittee on
Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management
Testimony
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I'm Era Marshall, Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Office of Equal Employment and Minority Affairs (OEEMA).

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management.

The Smithsonian is a trust instrumentality of the U.S. Congress, and has been in a public-private partnership since its establishment 162 years ago, with the mission being "the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men." The support of the Administration and the Congress is essential to that mission. With 19 museums, nine research centers and the National Zoo, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum and research complex and as such stands out as a unique entity and leader in science, history, art, and culture.

The requirements of the Small Business Administration (SBA) Act and small and small disadvantaged business (SDB) utilization goals established by the SBA do not apply to the Smithsonian. However, we are voluntarily committed to diversity across the Institution in recruitment, hiring, procurement and contracting. I will briefly outline our services and then I'd be happy to answer any questions.

My office, the Office of Equal Employment and Minority Affairs, (OEEMA), is responsible for advocating for Institution-wide compliance with Institutional policies as they relate to diversity and equal opportunity. My office directs, oversees, facilitates, and reports on all aspects of equal opportunity in the Smithsonian Institution's employment and business relationships. The Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) component of my office works closely with staff in the Smithsonian's Office of Contracting to ensure compliance with policies and procedures established to ensure SDBs are accorded maximum opportunity, consistent with the Institution's contracting requirements, to compete for and be awarded contracts for which they are qualified and capable of meeting the terms and conditions.

The managers and staffs at the Smithsonian's museums, research centers, and offices take very seriously their responsibilities to attract a diverse array of SDBs to help us fulfill our mission, and strongly adhere to a policy of equal opportunity in all aspects of our business relationships. Through a variety of means, including brochures, web sites, procurement fairs and more, we urge all small, minority, socially and economically disadvantaged 8(a), woman-owned, historically underutilized business zone (HUBZone), and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses to inform the Smithsonian about their

products and services available so that we can provide them with opportunities to compete for Smithsonian contract awards.

As a result of our outreach efforts, I am pleased to report that in the last five years we have done very well on contract awards to SDBs. We have submitted a chart that documents our success over the past 5 fiscal years. In fact, in the last two fiscal years, we more than doubled the SBA's government-wide small business set-aside goals.

Our success is attributed to our Supplier Diversity Program, conscientious Contracting Office staffs and committed project and program staffs at our museums, research centers and offices who are devoted to providing advocacy and direction to SDBs. The Supplier Diversity Program and Smithsonian Contracting Office strive to ensure that SDBs receive equal opportunity and appropriate consideration to receive contract awards to provide the Smithsonian's required goods and services whenever they are qualified. Smithsonian successes in SDB utilization are attributable to:

1. Implementing a Supplier Diversity Program policy (SD 216) and Contracting policy (SD 314, currently being revised) with procedures that clearly cite the Smithsonian's position for maximizing utilization of SDBs and manager's' and staffs' responsibilities for compliance with the policies;

2. Instituting in all senior managers' annual performance plans an element and standards for ensuring support of the Institution's SDB utilization goals and establishing initiatives for increasing SDB utilization at their organizations;

3. Conducting outreach to heighten SDBs' awareness of the contracting opportunities at the Smithsonian;

4. Encouraging development and implementation of creative initiatives that encourage increased utilization of SDBs through "win-win" strategies;

5. Establishing realistic goals, and monitoring achievement against those goals, for the participation of SDBs in Smithsonian contracting opportunities;

6. Maintaining a network of "SDP Liaison" staff that assists with promoting initiatives at the museums, research centers, and offices for increasing utilization of SDBs;

7. Arranging and conducting routine training to educate Smithsonian buyers on the benefits of utilizing SDBs;

8. Requiring subcontracting plans from large prime contractors, evaluating plans for adequate small business participation levels and negotiating goals for SDB participation, and monitoring prime contractors' achievements of goals during contract performance;

9. Maintaining a database of qualified SDBs that is accessible to buyers Smithsonian-wide; and

10. Publishing and distributing informational materials that assist SDBs in their marketing efforts to the Smithsonian.

To recap, the Smithsonian's commitment to diversity across the entire Institution is dynamic and strong and will remain so. Thank you for this opportunity. I'd be happy to answer any questions.