

Annual Event Supplies Plenty of Opportunity

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When Tierra Kavanaugh Turner first came to the Opportunity Exchange (OE) more than a decade ago, she didn't have the capacity or resources to be a supplier to Toyota. But that wasn't about to stop her. So she continued to come, year after year.

"They identified areas I needed to strengthen and improve – increasing staff, documenting processes, and exploring potential strategic alliances," says Turner, owner of TKT & Associates, Inc. and TKT-nectir Global Staffing, LLC. "In the interim I worked with their suppliers to gain specific industry experience and scale."

TKT provides supplier and workforce diversity programs for public and private sector clients, specialized staffing, consulting and strategic growth programs with a focus on minority- and women-owned businesses.

"You don't walk in the door with something handed to you," she says. Turner first secured contracts with Tier I suppliers EnovaPremier and Piston Automotive before becoming a Tier I to Toyota, providing contingent labor services for its Engineering and Technology groups. "Without demonstrated experience with Toyota or even the automotive industry, I had to prove that I deserved an opportunity to perform through quality of service, responsiveness, problem resolution and pricing. That demonstrated capability came through my experience with their Tier Is."

Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America (TEMA) started OE with about 300 attendees and it has grown to become one of the largest minority business events in the country, attracting about 1,700 people who attend free of charge. Since 2009, more than \$100 million in contracts have been generated by M/WBEs.

"As a business owner I am always working and it is rare to get a chance to step away from the business to work on it," Turner said. "Here you get to do more marketing of your business in a 3 ½ hour timeframe than it would take you a year to do, and you get valuable face-to-face time."

Now in its 25th year, the Toyota Opportunity Exchange is October 27-28 at the Duke Energy Convention Center in downtown Cincinnati. The event includes seminars, panel discussions and sharing of success stories by Toyota M/WBE suppliers, both direct and indirect.

For more information about Toyota's supplier diversity program, please visit www.toyotasupplier.com.