

Toyota Opportunity Exchange Matches Minority Businesses with Its Suppliers

November 13, 2012

CINCINNATI, Ohio, (Nov. 13, 2012) – Keith White, president of Liggon Trucking, felt pretty good when he headed back to Evansville, Ind., following his first visit to the Toyota Opportunity Exchange last November.

By the time the two-day event that provides minority-owned businesses like Liggon the opportunity to network with Toyota's direct suppliers was over, White had solidified a deal with Tier I supplier Millennium Steel Service that involved him adding a flatbed-hauling division to his company. It also meant the addition of nine employees, six trucks and \$1.2 million in new 2012 revenue.

"It helped us see another avenue for growth," said White, whose four-year old company previously focused only on the dump-truck hauling side of the business. "We had been working with Millennium to expand, but it was at Opportunity Exchange where we were able to sit down and solidify a plan and strategy. Toyota has created a legacy of encouraging its Tier I suppliers to develop and open the door for smaller minority-owned companies."

Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America (TEMA) concludes the 23rd running of the event today at the Duke Energy Convention Center in downtown Cincinnati. In all, nearly 1,600 people will have gathered at one of the largest minority business events in the country – free of charge. Over just the past two years, more than \$75 million worth of contracts were generated by minority business enterprises (MBEs) as a result.

Adrienne Trimble, manager, supplier diversity for TEMA, said the experience by Liggon and Millennium is what the event is all about.

"Each year, Opportunity Exchange offers our current and prospective suppliers a targeted forum for establishing and building meaningful business relationships, Trimble said. "We expect many more success stories this year."

The event kicked off yesterday with seminars and panel discussions focusing on several topics, including how MBEs and Tier I suppliers can turn these relationships into opportunities. Also, Toyota MBE suppliers (both direct and indirect) shared their success stories in relation to how innovation leads to lower cost of products, resulting in more business.

John E. Pepper, Jr., chairman of the National Underground Railroad and Freedom Center and retired chairman and CEO of The Procter & Gamble Co., provided the keynote presentation at today's breakfast. Following the breakfast, the tradeshow floor opened for business.

Over the course of two decades, Opportunity Exchange has helped generate new business for MBEs and continues to help direct suppliers diversify their own supply base. These partnerships help add value and innovation to Toyota's products and services. For more information about Toyota's supplier diversity program please visit www.toyotasupplier.com.

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