

**Special Task Force to Reduce Inefficiencies in Procurement (STRIP)****Location: Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW 1st St, Miami, FL 33128, 19th Floor****Date: February 12, 2026 - Time: 10:00 a.m.****Meeting Minutes**

Start: 10:24 am

Appointed: 15

Stop: 12:38 p.m.

Quorum: 8

<u>Members Present (10)</u>	<u>Members Absent (5)</u>
Carolina Vester	Albert "Al" Dotson, Jr. (ABSENT)
Chairwoman Diana Mendez	Aldo Leiva (ABSENT)
Erin Hendrix	Jina Marie Braynon (ABSENT)
John Elizabeth Aleman	Josenrique Cueto (ABSENT)
Kenneth Naylor	Rey T. Melendi (ABSENT)
Maira Suarez	
Miguel De Grandy	
Rudy Ortiz	
Victor Herrera	
Willy Bermello	

Roll Call

The meeting was called to order with a brief welcome and acknowledgment of attendees who wished to speak. Introductions were given by task force members, staff, and Zoom participants.

Welcome by Chairwoman

The Chairwoman welcomed everyone and immediately proceeded to public comments to maximize meeting time. The Chair established a two-minute time limit per speaker.

Reasonable Opportunity for the Public to be Heard

Alice Bravo, former Transit Director, expressed concerns regarding inconsistencies in the RFP shortlisting process. She noted that firms often experience uncertainty in how shortlists are determined, and that this lack of predictability has discouraged some firms from participating in County solicitations. Drawing from best practices, she recommended an approach similar to FDOT's process, which includes conducting an initial shortlisting through concise Letters of Interest ranging from two to ten pages and strictly limiting the shortlist to the number of firms stated in the RFP. She also raised concerns about contract exceptions occurring after award, the disclosure of price proposals to technical evaluation committees prior to scoring, and the subjective evaluation of price without clearly defined criteria. Ms. Bravo emphasized that the technical and pricing components should remain independent to maintain the integrity of the procurement process and to ensure the County receives the best overall value.

Augustine Maristani of Ardura provided several recommendations focused on maintaining stability and balance within the County's procurement framework. He recommended preserving SBE participation levels at 15–20 percent and maintaining locally headquartered business (LHB) participation at 45 percent. He also supported retaining five-member selection committees, with at least two members representing departments outside of the user department, to ensure broader oversight and objectivity in the evaluation process. Additionally, he emphasized the need to strengthen compliance verification for LHB firms in a manner like SBE requirements, reinforcing accountability and program integrity. Mr. Maristani expressed support for CPI adjustments, including the implementation of hourly salary caps, and underscored the importance of preserving the overall economic ecosystem balance within the County's contracting environment.

Franklin Torrealba (300 Engineering) advocated for maintaining the Locally Headquartered Business (LHB) Program, emphasizing its importance as a bridge for small firms transitioning out of the SBE program. He cautioned that reducing the SBE participation percentage to 10 percent would negatively impact small businesses and limit their growth opportunities. He further noted that large firms already receive approximately 55 percent of the market share, suggesting that additional reductions to small business participation would create further imbalance in the contracting landscape.

Mrs. McIntyre, participating virtually, expressed concerns regarding the structure and transparency of the County's procurement processes. She recommended that the Small Business Development (SBD) division operate as a standalone department to strengthen independence and oversight. She also raised concerns about bid opening transparency, recommending the reinstatement of live or virtual bid openings to ensure greater public visibility into the process. Mrs. McIntyre further alleged that delays in procurement timelines could create opportunities for impropriety and emphasized the importance of timely and transparent procedures. Following her remarks, the public comment period was formally closed.

Approval of January 14, 2026, Meeting Minutes

The Chair deferred approval due to pending corrections. No motion taken.

Follow Up

Discussion on purpose of Authorization-to-Negotiate: The Taskforce engaged in a detailed discussion regarding the Authorization to Negotiate (Intent to Award/IO Process), focusing on statutory requirements, delegated authority, and compliance safeguards. Staff clarified that there is a 30-day statutory timeframe governing certain post-recommendation actions within the procurement process. It was explained that the mayor has delegated authority to the Strategic Procurement Department (SPD) Director to execute specific actions within this framework, allowing the process to move forward without requiring separate Board approval at that stage.

The County Attorney's Office emphasized the legal necessity of conducting a review prior to entering into negotiations to ensure compliance with applicable laws and procedural requirements. In addition to legal considerations, staff noted the importance of maintaining adherence to federal audit standards, particularly for procurements involving federal funding or oversight. It was confirmed that the required legal and administrative review typically occurs within approximately one week, helping to ensure the process remains timely while preserving compliance and integrity. This item was presented for informational purposes only. No motion was required, and no formal action was taken by the Taskforce.

Appearance of Chairman Anthony Rodriguez

During the meeting, Anthony Rodriguez, Chairman of the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, stopped by and addressed the Task Force. Chairman Rodriguez acknowledged the work of the STRIP Task Force and expressed appreciation for the time, effort, and detailed discussions taking place to improve procurement processes. He emphasized the importance of staying focused on the Task Force's assigned scope and deliverables, ensuring the final report is organized, clear, and actionable, and meeting the established timeline for submission of recommendations. He encouraged the members to stay focused and stated that he looks forward to receiving the final Task Force recommendations.

Page Limitations for Proposals: Staff confirmed that page limitations are currently optional for Notices to Professional Consultants (NTPC) and for certain Goods and Services procurements under \$5 million. The Taskforce engaged in extensive discussion regarding whether page limits should be made mandatory, including parameters such as required font size, margin standards, and overall formatting consistency. Members also discussed enforcement measures and whether exceeding established page limits should result in a proposal being deemed non-responsive.

Recommendation: John Elizabeth Aleman made a motion to require that mandatory page limitations, including formatting requirements (such as font size and margins), be established within the solicitation document by the Strategic Procurement Department for the following procurement types:

- Notice to Professional Consultants (NTPC)
- Design-Build (Step 1)
- Goods and Services procurements under \$5 million
- Development solicitations (PDDs)
- First-phase qualification submissions in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) procurements

The motion further provided that, page limits and formatting requirements shall be clearly stated in the solicitation (RQ/RFP). Proposals exceeding the stated page limitations shall be deemed non-responsive or ineligible for award, if expressly stated in mandatory terms in the solicitation.

Willy Bermello seconded the motion. The motion was approved 8–1, Chair Diana Mendez voting against it cautioning that it may cause unintended consequences of proposals being disqualified based on technicalities rather than substance.

Results of Procurement Professional Survey

Rita advised that the results of the Procurement Professional Survey were shared with the Task Force and organized into three categories: Construction, A&E (Architecture & Engineering) Goods and Services. The results were provided in an Excel spreadsheet (three tabs) and uploaded to SharePoint. She described the overall feedback as very encouraging and generally positive.

The spreadsheet includes a summary at the bottom of each section showing the total number of “yes” and “no” responses for quick reference. One key takeaway staff is evaluating internally is whether additional training may be needed. Some responses suggested possible gaps in understanding of procurement processes, and staff is considering whether expanded or improved training could address those concerns. Rita indicated the Task Force may want to review the detailed responses further and continue discussion at a future meeting.

Oral Presentations – Closed Sessions

The Task Force discussed concerns regarding fairness during oral presentations in competitive procurements, particularly the disadvantage faced by the first presenter when questions are asked spontaneously in an open session. Members noted that subsequent firms gain insight into the selection committee’s focus areas, concerns, and line of questioning, creating a potential competitive advantage. The discussion distinguished between legitimate clarification questions and new substantive questions introduced during presentations, with members emphasizing that core questions should be agreed upon in advance to ensure consistency. It was further expressed that just as proposers are held strictly accountable to submission requirements, selection committee members should also adhere to structured procedures to maintain fairness.

The County Attorney’s Office clarified that Florida law does not require oral presentations to be conducted in sunshine and permits closed sessions provided they are recorded and made public in accordance with statutory requirements. The current open-session practice stems from the County’s Code of Silence, not state law.

Recommendation: After discussion, a motion was made and seconded to recommend amending the Code of Silence to allow closed oral presentations consistent with State law, with recordings made public after conclusion. The motion passed unanimously. 9-0.

Locally Headquartered (LHB) Definition

Staff explained that the current “nerve center” test for determining Locally Headquartered (LHB) status is creating gray areas and is too subjective in practice. The main issues come up when firms have multiple offices in different counties, when the Sunbiz principal address does not clearly reflect where real decision-making happens, and when larger firms purchase smaller local companies or operate through subsidiaries. There was also discussion about whether factors like how long a company has been operating in Miami-Dade and how many employees they have locally should play a bigger role in the determination.

Staff will circulate the current LHB affidavit to the Task Force so members can review it and provide input on how to simplify and clarify the criteria. The discussion will continue at a future meeting

Presentations

Jeanise Cummings-Labossiere, SBE Certification Chief, presented an update on efforts to simplify and streamline the SBE certification process. She reported significant progress in reducing the backlog of applications exceeding 90 days, bringing the number down from 162 to 17 through improved internal tracking and accountability measures. In addition to reducing processing time, staff reviewed the application itself and identified areas where requirements were unnecessarily burdensome or difficult to verify.

The proposed revisions would cut the number of application steps from 61 to 32 and reduce required supporting documents from 16 to 9. Among the notable changes is the elimination of the Personal Net Worth requirement and other documentation that cannot be meaningfully validated by the County. Staff also explained that after evaluating a self-certification model, they do not recommend moving forward with it due to potential fraud risks and concerns about maintaining program integrity. The Task Force expressed general support for the direction of the changes, and while no formal vote was taken, members agreed to review the final draft before adoption.

Adjournment

The meeting concluded after quorum was lost, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.