

**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 24, 2026 - Time: 10:00 a.m.****Meeting Minutes**

Start: 10:20 am

Appointed: 15

Stop: 1:33 p.m.

Quorum: 8

<u>Members Present (8)</u>	<u>Members Absent (4) Members Zoom (3)</u>
Chairwoman Diana Mendez	Albert "Al" Dotson, Jr. (ABSENT)
Erin Hendrix	Aldo Leiva (ABSENT)
Kenneth Naylor	Carolina Vester (ABSENT)
Maira Suarez	John Elizabeth Aleman (ZOOM)
Miguel De Grandy	Josenrique Cueto (ZOOM)
Rey T. Melendi	Jina Marie Braynon (ABSENT)
Rudy Ortiz	Willy Bermello (ZOOM)
Victor Herrera	

Roll Call

The meeting was called to order with a brief welcome and acknowledgment of attendees who wished to speak. Chairwoman Diana Mendez then requested introductions. Introductions were given by task force members, staff, and Zoom participants and the County Attorney's Office was also represented, with Eddie Gonzalez noted.

Reasonable Opportunity for the Public to be Heard

The Chair opened the floor for public comment for both in-person and Zoom participants.

Public Comment:

Mr. Orlando Castro with Hazen and Swayer spoke about concerns with the Locally Headquartered Business (LHB) designation. He explained that the program was originally created to keep County dollars in the local economy. However, he noted that some national companies may open small or minimal offices in Miami-Dade just to qualify for LHB status, while most of their work and business activity takes place outside the County. He stressed that there should be a clear difference between companies that have a true, long-standing presence in the community, with local employees and real investment and companies that simply set up "satellite" offices to meet the requirement.

No additional public comments were received. Public comment period was closed.

Approval of January 14, & February 12, 2026, Meeting Minutes

The Task Force reviewed the January 14, 2026, meeting minutes (with noted corrections) and the February 12, 2026, meeting minutes. Motion: To approve both sets of minutes. The minutes were Approved unanimously. (8-0)

Follow Up**New SBE Application & Proposed Revisions:**

SPD presented a revised and streamlined SBE application. The application was reduced from approximately 8 pages with over 60 questions to 30 questions. Required attachments were also reduced from 16 to a more limited number.

The discussion focused on two questions:

1. Whether the applicant shares office space with another company.
2. Whether the qualifier has been employed by or qualifies another company.

Members expressed concern that sharing office space does not automatically mean companies are affiliated, as it can simply reflect business growth. There were also concerns that requesting financial information from unrelated companies may go beyond what is reasonable. The question about the qualifier's employment was considered unclear and in need of better wording. Members stated that verification should rely on clear, objective records, such as state licensing information, whenever possible.

The Task Force agreed that the office-sharing question, as written, is not relevant to determining SBE eligibility. The qualifier question should be revised to clearly identify whether the qualifier is at the time of application qualifying other firms and whether they have ownership in other firms. The Chair summarized that disclosure is appropriate to identify potential red flags that may require further due diligence.

Establishing SBE measures in contracts:

SPD presented a proposed standardized framework for applying SBE measures. The current SBE tools include bid preference, selection factor, subcontracting goals, and set asides.

For construction projects, state preemption prohibits the use of subcontracting goals. As a result, the existing construction framework will remain in place without changes.

For Architecture and Engineering (A&E) contracts, the Task Force previously approved a 10% SBE minimum for task-based contracts and a 15% SBE minimum for defined-scope contracts. Higher percentages may be applied depending on market availability. These measures were confirmed and reaffirmed by the Task Force.

SPD presented a proposal to implement automatic SBE measures for Goods and Services procurements. The proposal includes applying an automatic Selection Factor to RFPs and an automatic Bid Preference to ITBs. Additionally, SPD proposed using set-asides for commodities that historically have strong SBE participation, such as janitorial and landscaping services.

Taskforce Recommendations

The Task Force discussed challenges related to Invitations to Quote (ITQs) under \$250,000. It was noted that departments are often required to rebid solicitations when SBE firms do not respond or when participation is limited. This can delay projects and create administrative inefficiencies.

To address this issue, SPD proposed an expedited approach. Under the proposal, if at least one SBE submits a bid that is within 10% of the lowest non-SBE bid, the award may be made directly to the SBE. The intent is to avoid repeated rebidding, maintain cost controls, and preserve meaningful opportunities for SBEs to compete.

Recommendation:

The Task Force recommends that in lieu of providing for a separate SBE goal, that for Invitations to Quote involving purchases of \$250,000 or less, there be an automatic set aside, if a small company bids, as recommended by Staff. Chairwoman Mendez made the motion, Erin Hendrix seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. (8-0)

Recommendation:

The Task Force recommends that in lieu of providing for a separate SBE goal, for Invitations to Bid, there be a Bid Preference only and for Request for Proposals that there be a Selection Factor only. Chairwoman Mendez made the motion, Miguel De Grandy seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. (8-0)

The Task Force discussed concerns about the County's procurement rules being spread across multiple sections of the Code, several implementing orders, and standalone resolutions. Members noted that this structure makes it difficult for staff and vendors to locate current requirements and determine which provisions apply. It was discussed that amendments are often adopted through separate resolutions without clearly identifying which implementing order is being revised, creating confusion and inefficiencies. Staff must frequently cross-reference multiple documents, which slows processes and increases the risk of inconsistencies. The Task Force agreed that the issue is structural, not policy based. Members supported reorganizing the procurement framework to consolidate provisions into a simplified structure, making it easier for stakeholders to access and apply the rules consistently.

Recommendation:

Recommend reorganizing the County's procurement regulations to create a simplified procurement framework under the Code, with reference to a single implementing order that consolidates all procurement-related implementing orders. The objective of this recommendation is to ensure all procurement stakeholders have easy access to all relevant provisions. Miguel De Grandy made the motion, Rey T. Melendi seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. (8-0)

The Task Force discussed how the current Code requires vendors to claim Local Business Preference at the time they submit their bid. If a vendor forgets to check the box or submit the required form, they can lose the preference, even if they clearly qualify as a local business. Members agreed this creates unnecessary problems. A simple mistake can lead to objections, delays, and extra review, even when the vendor meets the local requirements. The group felt that eligibility should be based on whether the business qualifies, not just whether a box was checked.

Recommendation:

The Task Force recommends amending the County Code to clarify that Local Business Preference can be verified before award. Chairwoman Mendez made the motion, Rudy Ortiz seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. (8-0)

The Task Force discussed the timing of when issues related to rankings, scoring, and local preference should be raised in two-step, qualifications-based procurements. Members reviewed the current objection process considered how a similar structure could be applied earlier in the procurement timeline. The discussion focused on implementing a five-day objection period following the release of the Step-One Selection Committee Coordinator report. Members agreed that incorporating this structured objection period after Step One would create consistency with existing procedures and promote earlier resolution of matters within the procurement process.

Recommendation:

The Task Force recommends that any local preference issues are addressed promptly during the procurement process, recommend that during two-step qualifications based procurements a 5-day objection period similar to what is currently provided under Section 2-8.4 be implemented after Step-1 of the process, whereby any question, issue, objection or disagreement concerning, generated by, or arising from the rankings, scoring or recommendations of a selection committee in a competitive procurement process shall be deemed waived by the protestor and shall be rejected as a basis of a bid protest unless it was brought by that proposer to the attention of the procurement agent or contracting officer in writing with a copy to the Clerk of Board and in compliance with the Cone of Silence provisions in Section 2-11.1 of this Code, within five (5) working days of the date the proposers have received a Step-1 Selection Committee Coordinator

report. Miguel De Grandy made the motion, Maira Suarez seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. (8-0)

The Task Force discussed how local business and locally headquartered business preferences are currently verified during the procurement process. Members noted that the County primarily relies on documentation submitted by vendors and internal review by staff. The discussion centered on adding an additional layer of oversight through periodic random audits conducted by the Inspector General (IG). The purpose would not be to change the preference policy itself, but to strengthen accountability and ensure that certifications and affidavits are accurate.

Recommendation:

The Task Force recommends that the IG perform random audits to verify claims involving local business and locally headquartered business preferences. Chairwoman Mendez made the motion, Miguel De Grandy seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. (8-0)

Locally Headquartered Business Discussion

The Task Force held a focused discussion on the challenges associated with the current definition of a Locally Headquartered Business (LHB). Staff explained that the existing “nerve center” test is difficult to verify in practice and requested guidance on identifying a more objective, easily validated standard. Members also expressed concern that some firms may attempt to claim LHB status without meeting the true criteria. The Chair noted that the County’s reliance on affidavits submitted with proposals creates uncertainty, as it is often unclear at the time of submittal whether a firm will ultimately meet the nerve center requirement. To address this, the Chair suggested establishing an LHB registry that would certify firms in advance, allowing prime contractors to rely on verified LHB status thereby reducing the risk of disruptions later in the procurement process. The Task Force members agreed to review potential improvements to the definition and return with a recommendation at the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting concluded after quorum was lost, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:33 p.m.