



Special Task Force to Reduce Inefficiencies in Procurement (STRIP)
Location: Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW 1st St, Miami, FL 33128, 19th Floor
Date: March 5, 2026 - Time: 10:00 a.m.
Meeting Minutes

Start: 10:08 a.m.

Stop: 1:33 p.m.

Appointed: 15

Quorum: 8

<u>Members Present (12)</u>	<u>Members Absent (3)</u>
Albert "Al" Dotson, Jr.	Aldo Leiva
Chairwoman Diana Mendez	Carolina Vester
Erin Hendrix	Jina Marie Braynon
John Elizabeth Aleman	
Josenrique Cueto	
Kenneth Naylor	
Maira Suarez	
Miguel De Grandy	
Rey T. Melendi	
Rudy Ortiz	
Victor Herrera	
Willy Bermello	

Roll Call

The meeting of the Special Task Force to Reduce Inefficiencies in Procurement (STRIP) was called to order at 10:08 a.m. Quorum was confirmed. Introductions were given by task force members, and staff.

Reasonable Opportunity for the Public to be Heard

Pete Hernandez, AECOM - Mr. Hernandez spoke to the Task Force about the Locally Headquartered Business scoring, especially for professional services. He shared that while he supports the Small Business program and mentoring small firms, the current structure feels unbalanced. He explained that even large firms with a strong Miami-Dade presence, local staff, and local investment are still at a disadvantage. To stay competitive, firms are often pushed to give 35% or more of the contract to locally headquartered firms just to get four points, and even more for five. Because of that, team structures are being built around scoring instead of what's best for the County.

Agustin Maristany

Mr. Maristany also spoke on the Locally Headquartered Business issue. He shared that the intent was to help firms coming out of the small business program stay competitive, especially since larger firms have historically dominated. He said the program serves a purpose but could be stronger. His suggestions included better verification beyond affidavits, cross-checking records, adding safeguards against pass-throughs, requiring more control by the qualifying firm, regular recertification, random audits, penalties, and more transparency. He was asked to put his recommendations in writing to share with the Task Force.

Franklin Torrealba, 300 Engineering - Mr. Torrealba provided comments in support of the current locally headquartered structure and explained the intent behind it. He stated that the concept was developed over many years by the industry and was meant to help firms that outgrow the Small Business Enterprise category but still need a way to remain competitive. He clarified that in the professional services scoring structure, large firms already retain a significant portion of the available points, and that the locally headquartered and small business portions account for the rest. He emphasized that the idea was not created randomly or politically, but as the result of many years of work by the industry.

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

Approval of 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. (12-0)

Confirmed Meetings Dates the Task Force discussed scheduling additional meetings to stay on track and complete the final report. Members reviewed the availability survey and worked through potential dates in March and April. It was noted that the group plans to request an extension from the Chairman's Office, and that request will be supported by a clear meeting plan showing a commitment to meet weekly if needed. There was also discussion around quorum concerns and the importance of all members confirming their availability so meetings can be scheduled efficiently moving forward.

Discussion on Survey Questions It was acknowledged that the survey was sent out and that members had a chance to look at it. The group agreed to bring it back at a future meeting so everyone can come prepared with feedback and recommendations.

Taskforce Recommendations

Locally Headquartered Business Definition The majority of the meeting focused on defining Locally Headquartered Business more clearly. There was background research on how other jurisdictions define local headquarters or principal place of business. Examples included using a "nerve center" approach, majority of employees located in the jurisdiction, principal office location, or similar factors. It was also explained that in Miami-Dade, the issue has become

especially important in professional services procurements because locally headquartered status can affect scoring.

The taskforce reviewed how the current professional services scoring works. Under the current system, a proposer can receive points for being a locally headquartered prime and additional points for using locally headquartered subconsultants.

The members discussed whether the problem was truly the definition of locally headquartered business or whether the deeper issue was the disadvantage experienced by larger firms that have had a real, long-standing presence in Miami-Dade but are not technically headquartered here.

Some members felt the definition should remain meaningful and not be diluted, while others believed the County also needed a way to recognize firms with major local investment, many employees, and years of local presence.

Procurement clarified that staff's immediate request to the Task Force was to help define what qualifies as a Locally Headquartered Business, because the current standard has created confusion and challenges, especially when firms have offices in more than one county and submit affidavits claiming Miami-Dade as their headquarters. Staff emphasized that the issue is not the scoring structure itself, but the difficulty of applying and verifying the definition consistently.

Recommendation

A motion was made and approved recommending to support SPD efforts to train departments regarding an exception to the EDP program that allows the participation of non-locally headquartered firms in the EDP program for specialized work. Approved 12-0

Recommendation

A motion was made and approved recommending to include as one alternative criterion for qualifying as a Locally Headquartered Business that more than 50 percent of the company's full-time employees work in Miami-Dade County. Approved 12-0

Recommendation

A motion was also approved recommending to allow locally headquartered status to a firms that certify that Miami-Dade County is the only local headquarters being claimed. Approved 12-0

The Task Force also discussed creating a new category to recognize firms that are not technically headquartered in Miami-Dade but have maintained a substantial presence in the County for many years. The taskforce members discussed whether this should be treated separately from locally headquartered status so that the locally headquartered definition itself is not altered beyond its original intent.

The Task Force also talked through whether the County should move toward a pre-certification or repository system for locally headquartered businesses.

The idea was to have companies verified upfront, instead of reviewing affidavits during each individual procurement. Members discussed how that could help with consistency and reduce back-and-forth during evaluations, but also recognized it would require additional structure, maintenance, and clear criteria tied to whatever definition is ultimately adopted.

Former A&E Task Force Chair Rick Crooks was recognized and shared some background on the “nerve center” definition. He explained that this approach was originally used because it aligns with Broward and is familiar within the industry. He also emphasized that the intent behind the locally headquartered preference was to support real local economic activity, including jobs and functions like HR, IT, and accounting that typically come with having a true headquarters presence in the County.

Local Utilization Plan in Place of Local Preference for Certain Unique Large Projects

The Task Force discussed a staff recommendation concerning rare, unique, and large projects where there is a limited number of local firms that are likely to serve as the prime. Staff explained that in these limited cases, the current local preference structure can discourage competition from outside firms, even when those outside firms could bring in local subconsultants and local workforce participation.

Staff described a concept in which, instead of using traditional local preference, the solicitation could include a local plan requiring proposers to explain how they would use local companies and local employees on the project. Staff explained that the purpose would not be to eliminate local participation, but to secure it in a more flexible and meaningful way on highly specialized projects.

Special Purpose Entities and Local Preference

The Task Force discussed how local preference is being applied when proposals come in under a Special Purpose Entity (SPE), and it was clear there’s a practical issue with how it works today.

Right now, the rules focus on the entity that’s submitting the proposal. The problem is that many SPEs are created just for a specific project, so on paper they look brand new and don’t show a local presence. But behind that SPE are companies that are actually local and would qualify if they were submitting on their own or as a joint venture.

Because of that, local firms can lose out on local preference simply based on how the deal is structured, not because they aren’t local. The Task Force agreed that wasn’t the intent of the program and creates an unnecessary barrier.

Recommendation:

A motion was made and approved recommending that the definition of local preference in Section 2-8.5(c) of the County Code be amended to allow entities owned by at least 51% or more by owners who qualify under local preference to qualify for the preference. Approved 12-0.

Evaluations and Responsiveness

There was discussion about how departments often use different forms, affidavits, and responsiveness requirements depending on the procurement type. Members noted that this inconsistency makes it more difficult for vendors to know exactly what is required and also creates more work for staff reviewing submittals.

SPD noted that staff had already presented a package of forms and recommendations in prior meetings aimed at reducing and standardizing required documents, and that some of those recommendations had already been adopted by the Task Force.

There was discussion on the formal responsiveness review process.

The concept discussed was that when staff identifies issues that could potentially render a proposer non-responsive, the proposer should be notified and given a short opportunity to respond before a final non-responsiveness opinion is issued.

The goal discussed was fairness and efficiency, especially on larger procurements where a proposer may have spent significant time and money preparing a submission. Members discussed whether such a process would help clarify missing information and avoid later protests.

Assistant County Attorney Eddie Gonzalez and procurement staff explained how responsiveness issues are currently handled, including the distinction between issues of responsiveness, and issues of responsibility.

There was discussion about whether the proposed process would reduce disputes or instead create more steps and more delay. Staff noted that many issues are already handled informally before they ever reach a formal legal opinion, and there was concern about how such a process would work in practice, especially if additional issues arise later in the procurement.

No final vote was taken on this item. The Chair agreed to bring the matter back for future discussion, and members were asked to share examples of situations where a non-responsiveness determination may have benefited from an additional response opportunity before final action.

Adjournment

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