

case study

Economic Impact Analysis of Contractor Spending

Helping Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Measure the Economic Impact of WMBE Contracting



OPPORTUNITY

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) sought to better understand the economic and community impact of its Women and Minority-Owned Business Enterprise (WMBE) contracting program. Beyond documenting contractor spending, SPU wanted to assess how WMBE participation contributes to regional economic activity and understand participants' experiences navigating the contracting process.

OUR APPROACH

DIRS conducted a mixed-methods economic impact study combining quantitative economic modeling with qualitative stakeholder interviews.

Using the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis' Regional Input-Output Modeling System (RIMS II), DIRS analyzed the direct, indirect, and induced economic effects of SPU's WMBE contractor spending. This analysis was complemented by in-depth interviews with WMBE prime contractors and subcontractors to better understand their contracting experiences, professional relationships, and the broader impacts on their businesses and communities.

OUTCOMES

The study helped SPU:

- Quantify the regional economic impact of WMBE contractor spending
- Better understand contractor experiences throughout the procurement process.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen supplier diversity initiatives.
- Inform future contracting strategies through data-driven insights.



The qualitative findings provided valuable insights into the WMBE community and opportunities to improve contractor experiences and outcomes. Margo's economic expertise and thoughtful partnership strengthened our analysis and sharpened our thinking throughout the project.

