

November 12, 2008

Toyota turning to minorities

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Toyota increased by \$200 million last year its spending with minority suppliers.

The new number came Tuesday from the Toyota Opportunity Exchange at the Duke Energy Convention Center downtown, attended by about 1,600 participants.

The annual event put on by Erlanger-based Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America Inc. is designed to provide minority-business enterprises with the chance to network and develop relationships with more than 250 of Toyota's top suppliers.



Photos by Tony Jones/The Enquirer
Gene Tabor, Toyota's general manager of supplier diversity, visits the Duke Energy Convention Center event.

Last year, Toyota spent more than \$1.4 billion with minority suppliers, up from \$1.2 billion in 2006, says Adrienne Trimble, a Toyota supplier diversity manager.

Toyota has a goal of buying 10 percent of its U.S. purchases for parts, goods and services from minority businesses.

It spent about 7.7 percent with those suppliers last year.

Trimble said Toyota was able to increase its spending minority suppliers despite the economic and production challenges it faced.

She said Toyota accomplished that by remaining committed to its target and increasing its number of minority suppliers and minority spending. She said Toyota boosted its number of minority suppliers by about 5 percent last year from roughly 130 in 2006.

Trimble said among the biggest challenges Toyota faces now is boosting spending with minority suppliers given market conditions.

Two local businesses have benefited from Toyota's efforts.



Carl Satterwhite (right), president of River City Furniture, West Chester Township, talks with Roger Stone of Filter Unlimited. River City got a \$2 million contract last year.

Carl Satterwhite, president of River City Furniture in West Chester, said his company won a contract last year worth more than \$2 million to supply Toyota with about 1,500 work stations and other furniture and services.

Coolant Control Inc., a St. Bernard-based maker of industrial lubricants and water treatment projects, landed business from last year's event worth about \$300,000 to the company's bottom line, according to Toyota. Coolant Controls earned business with three of Toyota's Tier I suppliers including AK Steel, Metaldyne and ZF Zachs.

Greg Battle, co-owner of Coolant Controls, said the event allows minority firms to talk with and meet Toyota's suppliers at one time.