

Equitable Construction Future at Harvard: Our Work with the Construction Academy

By the 2024-2025 SSAs from sections B, C & E

Harvard Procurement

Harvard University desires to create a more inclusive and equitable business environment that supports small business enterprises (SBEs) with a focus on:

- Economic empowerment. By nurturing the growth and advancement of SBEs, we contribute to the economic empowerment of small and diverse businesses and our local communities.
- Innovation and ingenuity. We embrace innovation and differences in perspectives and ideas that lead to cost efficiencies but also provide a competitive edge, benefiting both the University and the communities we serve.
- Advocacy for systemic change. Through economic inclusion and diversity initiatives, we aim to address barriers and disparities with solutions that uplift communities.
- Social responsibility. By fostering economic empowerment and promoting economic inclusion and diversity, our work aligns with the University's mission for social responsibility by contributing to our community.

The University has developed a multifaceted approach in its procurement practices. The key ways in which work contributes to this commitment are:

- Sustainable programs. Developing and sustaining programs that promote economic inclusion, creating pathways for SBEs to participate in procurement processes.
- Enhanced access to opportunities. By facilitating access to opportunities—including providing information, resources, training, and support—we ensure that SBEs have a fair and equitable chance to engage with Harvard.
- Innovation and education. We foster innovation within the procurement ecosystem. In collaboration with Schools and Units across the University, we educate SBEs on best practices, compliance, and business strategies, empowering them to succeed.
- Local purchasing. We encourage local purchasing, benefiting both the University and the surrounding communities. Supporting local businesses contributes to economic growth and sustainability.

Project Context

Harvard's Strategic Procurement office, with advisory input from the University Construction Management Council (UCMC), established the HU Construction Academy to create a pipeline of skilled Small Business Enterprise (SBE) trade partners. The Construction Academy aims to empower SBEs by equipping them with knowledge, experience, and valuable connections.

The initiative offers targeted training and project experience to broaden the pipeline of skilled contractors working on Harvard capital projects and to expand future opportunities for trade partners to successfully bid and work on Harvard projects.

Harvard's Office for Strategic Procurement has a playbook on how to run a construction academy and our team was excited to support its refinement.

What We Have Worked On

Partnering with Harvard Strategic Procurement, Office for Sustainability, Harvard Business School Operations, Construction Managers, General Contractors, and Trade Partners, our project team helped improve the Construction Academy experience by:

- Updating and refining the Harvard University Construction Academy Playbook
- Creating an accompanying "Introduction to Construction Academy" presentation to educate new Harvard stakeholders about the Construction Academy in a concise, user-friendly format
- Conducting interviews with representatives of key Construction Academy stakeholders to determine lessons learned
- Proposing refinements for future Construction Academy cohorts

Looking Ahead

As Harvard continues to serve students and lead in work which protects the climate and environment, advances a more equitable society, and promotes the wellbeing of people at Harvard and beyond, programs like the Construction Academy are critical to supporting this mission from the ground up.

We hope that the Office of Procurement continues to view participant success as a measure of the Academy's success and are proud to have contributed to a project that bridges the worlds of higher education, infrastructure, equity, and the environment. We are excited to watch the Construction Academy grow as a model for inclusive project development at Harvard and beyond.