RailBusinessDaily

Free training to help UK businesses secure rail and road construction contracts

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HS2 Ltd, Highways England, Network Rail and Transport for London have joined forces in encouraging small and medium sized businesses to register for free training courses, designed to improve their prospects of meeting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) supply chain requirements and help them secure future contract opportunities.

Working in partnership with the Supply Chain Sustainability School, the four transport bodies want to make it easier for companies to demonstrate their commitment to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agenda. The Fairness, Inclusion and Respect (FIR) Programme has been developed for the construction industry to provide an industry context to the EDI agenda.

The Supply Chain Sustainability School is recognised as a leading training provider and has supported SMEs with accessing free training since 2012. Through the FIR programme they have supported over 2,000 businesses, helping them to improve their understanding of Fairness, Inclusion and Respect, and its importance in the workplace.

All four organisations outline good practice standards and requirements expected from suppliers to win

work. Collectively, the four bodies are now supporting UK businesses to get ‘contract ready’ by providing access to a consistent source of training. This removes the requirement for businesses to complete numerous training and assessment programmes to satisfy multiple clients.

The CITB have funded the FIR Programme for five years, but with the economic impact of COVID they had to reduce funding for this financial year, which meant the FIR programme faced challenges in sustaining its full offer of training. HS2 Ltd, Highways England, Network Rail and Transport for London stepped in to support the FIR programme, to ensure SMEs can continue to access courses free of charge to support their long-term growth prospects and maintain consistency in the UK’s pipeline of infrastructure programmes.

Mark Lomas, Head of EDI at HS2 Ltd said: “We’re passionate about improving EDI and FIRs outcomes right across our supply chain. A project the size, scale and longevity of HS2 offers a unique opportunity to deliver measured improvements that can improve people’s working lives and career prospects. We’re proud to be supporting this initiative and hope to see many SMEs registering to take part.”

Malcolm Dare, Executive Director of Commercial and Procurement at Highways England, said: “We are delighted to be working closely with HS2, Network Rail and TfL and the Supply Chain Sustainability School to grow our supply chains’ EDI capability and resilience. We are committed to this agenda and are looking to bring positive and lasting change by delivering meaningful social impact and value through this work.”

Loraine Martins, Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Network Rail said: “The opportunity to collaborate with Highways England, HS2 and TfL to support our respective and often shared supply chains, so that we are building diversity and inclusion confidence and practices within our sector, was too important to miss. The more that we can spread best practice and raise standards together, the more beneficial to our collective workforces. We’re pleased to be able to support the Supply Chain Sustainability School in this way and to further our shared ambition to have a more diverse and inclusive working environment.”

Staynton Brown, Director of Diversity, Inclusion and Talent at Transport for London, said: “Creating a truly diverse and inclusive culture within our sector brings many benefits in delivering a transport network that reflects the communities it serves. This starts with educating and influencing the biases and behaviours of those who work within our industry.

“We are proud to working with the transport industry to continue our support for these free courses that the Fairness, Inclusion and Respect programme provides. This training will help our critical UK-wide supply chain partners improve upon the great work many are already doing. This will help to continue to drive down barriers and ensure working in transport infrastructure projects is truly accessible to all.”

Businesses can access free online EDI/FIR training pathways at www.supplychainschool.co.uk/fir which cover the following topics:

- FIR e-learning: Recruiting People, Fairly and Inclusively
- FIR e-learning: Managing Challenging Conversations
- The Business Case for Fairness, Inclusion & Respect
- Monitoring & Reporting Workplace Diversity
- FIR in Procurement and Supply Chain Management
- Understanding Unconscious bias
- Mental wellbeing in Construction

Completion of online courses allows participants to gain CPD points and access bespoke action plans which promote the implementation of good practice workplace standards.

Ian Heptonstall, Director of the Supply Chain Sustainability School said: “I’m delighted that we have four leading infrastructure clients providing a clear and consistent “ask” of their supply chain. The funding provided by these clients enables suppliers to access construction specific training that will help them develop their knowledge of equality and diversity good practice and in turn foster a culture of fairness, inclusion and respect within their teams – making our industry better for all.”

For more information and to register for the free online learning sessions, visit supplychainschool.co.uk

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd