



Canadian delegation at the 2011 WBENC National Conference in Las Vegas.

Meet Fortune 500 buyers in Orlando

Pack your bags and business cards! The Business Women in International Trade (BWIT) team is planning its 2012 trade mission to the annual Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) National Conference and Business Fair in Orlando, Florida—and you're invited to participate.

The WBENC conference and fair is the world's largest business fair in the U.S. for women-owned enterprises, offering business women access to contract opportunities with Fortune 500 companies and governments through their supplier diversity programs.

This year's mission runs June 18–22 and starts with a full-day delegation briefing. The WBENC conference and fair highlights include training and workshops, learning about selling to Fortune 500 companies, connecting with buyers and potential partners, and support from Canadian trade commissioners who have insight into opportunities in the market. The event is expected to attract 3,200 participants and more than 300 exhibitors.

"WBENC is unlike any other trade show," says Trade Commissioner Josie Mousseau. "Instead of standing in a booth promoting their products or services, participants visit booths hosted by supplier diversity procurement officers from companies such as Target, Coca-Cola, IBM, Cisco and Walmart. You need to arrive prepared. You're standing in front of a buyer who has two minutes to listen to you. It's critical to have your pitch down pat before you go."

Why should you attend? Consider this: Quebec designer Johanne Boivin joined 78 Canadian delegates participating in last year's mission to find out about supplier diversity opportunities and to promote her handbags and accessories. She secured one-on-one meetings with buyers from Macy's and J.C. Penney, then returned home and applied for certification as a woman-owned business with WEConnect Canada so she can take advantage of supplier diversity contracts with these companies and others. She is now certified and is working with the Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) to expand her business in the U.S.

Armed with her certification, Alberta-based Lollipop Beauty Bar and Happy Hippo Bath Co. President Jodee Prouse participated in the 2011 trade mission and showcased her products to MGM Resorts buyers through meetings supported by the TCS. "The supplier diversity procurement officers from MGM loved the brand," says Prouse. "I went back and forth to Las Vegas three times in 90 days after that meeting. We signed deals with four of their properties. That would never have happened without the support of the TCS on the mission."

Sound intriguing? Contact the BWIT team to learn more about this year's mission. Information about the WBENC National Conference and Business Fair is available at www.wbenc.org/wbencconf.

Countdown to mission success

List the top companies you would like to do business with at WBENC. Several weeks before the mission, go to their websites and register as a certified woman business owner. There, you'll find out what products and services many of them require, but don't stop there. Research the companies even further. Who are their top procurement people? Familiarize yourself with the company's culture, its latest news, its needs and wants. Gather all the research you can. You'll be much better prepared to speak directly with the corporation—and make a lasting first impression!

Barbara Mowat, President
Impact Communications | Abbotsford, BC

Helping women drive our economy

The Business Women in International Trade program recognizes the significant value that Canadian women-owned enterprises bring to our economy. Managed by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT), BWIT offers targeted information and services to support Canadian women's global business efforts, including:

- Access to information about support networks, government resources, business women's associations, financing, trade missions and events, webinars, training and international business resources
- Connections to help women make the most of global supplier diversity opportunities open to certified women-owned enterprises
- Partnership opportunities with other business women and key organizations through trade missions and networking events

"DFAIT's program provides guidance and one-stop access to crucial information to help business women build on their momentum on a global scale," says Trade Commissioner Josie Mousseau.

That momentum is impressive. Firms run by Canadian women are creating jobs at four times the national average rate. Women are starting companies at double the national average rate. Majority women-owned, small and medium-sized enterprises accounted for more than \$117 billion of economic activity in Canada in 2007—and represent "an untapped source of economic opportunity," according to the Canadian Task Force for Women's Business Growth.

"International business is central to our economic success," says Mousseau. "Women have a major contribution to make—and the Trade Commissioner Service is there to support them and reduce the risk of expanding globally."



Words of wisdom

The TCS is highly influential in global markets. They have an extensive network of contacts that would take us months to develop on our own.

Johanne Boivin,
President and Designer
Joanel Inc. | Laval, QC