



Press Release

Ground-Breaking Supplier Diversity Program to be Launched in Sweden

In March 2016, the procurement pilot program int'Link will be launched. The program intends to facilitate the integration of small immigrant owned businesses into the procurement process of larger companies in Sweden. Based on a U.S. model, the program was initiated by the International Entrepreneur Association in Sweden (IFS) and the American Chamber of Commerce in Sweden (AmCham Sweden), convened by the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm. Member companies participating in the pilot phase of int'Link include ICA, IBM, SEB, Hammarskiöld & Co, Pfizer, and UPS.

“There has never been a more comprehensive, collaborative effort undertaken in Sweden to help such a diverse array of businesses learn how to work together,” IFS Chairman Rafael Bermejo said. “Many immigrants have an entrepreneurial spirit, but not the network or knowledge on how to navigate the local business community. The large, well-known companies that are taking an active role in assisting businesses owned by immigrants learn how to integrate into their supply chains deserve a great deal of recognition for their commitment to this program.”

Today, one out of five businesses started in Sweden are immigrant-owned. According to Tillväxtverket, nearly 95,000 registered companies employing 300,000 people are owned and operated by immigrants. int'Link is being introduced as a program with the potential to promote economic growth, encourage job creation, and break down barriers that currently restrict integration into the supply chains of larger companies. The job creating aspect of the program is important. The unemployment rate among foreign-born workers in relation to native-born Swedes is high. Unemployment measures up to 16.4% among foreign-born workers compared to 6.2% among Swedes – a difference of 10.2 percentage points.

“Inspired in part by, and with the support of similar programs that have been highly successful for decades in the United States and England, int'Link offers great promise to impact job creation in Sweden,” said AmCham Sweden Vice Chair Gary Baker, Executive Director of Climate Change and Sustainability Services at EY in Stockholm. “The gap in unemployment between foreign- and native-born Swedes is among the highest in Europe and we need innovative initiatives to narrow it.”

During the pilot phase of the program, int'Link will offer qualified training and tools to build faster and more secure relationships between the immigrant-owned businesses and Charter Member companies committed to the initiative. int'Link will be evaluated after six months before expanding its scope to include companies and government agencies throughout Sweden.

“This is a unique opportunity for our organization to be involved in sharing best business

practices from the U.S. with the Swedish market”, said AmCham Sweden Managing Director Peter Dahlen. “The economic growth that is possible by successfully launching int’Link will have an incredibly positive impact across the country from both a business standpoint, as well as culturally.”

For more information regarding int’Link, inquiries should be addressed to:

Rafael Bermejo, Chairman IFS

rafael@yumpacademy.com

+46 70 639 9121