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## World Business Chicago Launches Program to Strengthen Local Businesses and Boost Economy

*"Anchor" Institutions Including the City of Chicago, Cook County and Private Partners Support Local Businesses, Drive Economic Growth*

**CHICAGO, March 17, 2014** – World Business Chicago (WBC) today launched Chicago Anchors for a Strong Economy (CASE). The new program will strengthen Chicago's economy by building ties between the city's largest "anchor" institutions and its neighborhood-based businesses, in turn impacting local firms, increasing community and neighborhood vitality, strengthening the region's business-to-business platform, generating jobs, and helping grow the regional economy.

"Chicago's businesses are the backbone of our economy, and by connecting them with the city's largest institutions, and providing them with training, we are giving them new opportunities to compete," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel, chairman of World Business Chicago. "Such business-to-business relationships will provide 'anchor' institutions with another avenue to invest in competitive, local businesses, generate jobs, and help Chicago's economy to thrive."

CASE assesses anchor institutions' product and service needs and compares those needs with neighborhood business assets to make connections for local suppliers of goods and services. Some of the businesses will also have the opportunity to participate in training to prepare them to respond to those procurement needs. CASE businesses will then have the opportunity to bid on contracts from any of the anchor institutions in the program.

To date, anchor institutions including the City of Chicago, Cook County, ComEd, Illinois Institute of Technology, Rush University Medical Center, University of Chicago, University of Chicago Medical Center, and University of Illinois Chicago, have committed to the program.

The CASE program model was developed by the WBC team in close partnership with the University of Chicago, which approached WBC with an interest in pursuing a local purchasing initiative. The University and the Medical Center began work on a pilot program for CASE in mid-2013 focused on building strategic partnerships with local suppliers.

"The University of Chicago is committed to working in partnership with our surrounding communities to spur economic development and create new opportunities for local businesses on the Mid-South Side," said University of Chicago President Robert J. Zimmer. "CASE provides a new avenue to extend that model to major institutions across Chicago so that, together, we can bring new opportunities to neighborhoods and local businesses throughout the city."

"Cook County's participation in CASE signals our continued, active engagement in growing our region's economy. With our annual purchases and vendor contracts representing millions of dollars annually, we recognize that we are indeed an anchor institution and an economic driver in northern Illinois," said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "The CASE initiative stretches far beyond the City's borders to some of our most economically challenged areas of the city and suburbs. As with our collaboration with the City of Chicago on workforce development, we expect to see small business growth emerge in these areas through this effort."

CASE aligns with the Mayor's Plan strategy to develop and deploy neighborhood assets to align with regional economic growth. The strategy calls for promoting strong, well-connected neighborhoods that enhance regional growth; supporting continuous development of human capital, business and real estate assets; and connecting neighborhood assets to regional systems, by enabling better connections to labor, business, financial and other markets.

"Investing in neighborhood assets that prepare us for the next economy is a major part of Mayor Emanuel's Plan for Economic Growth and Jobs that we are currently implementing to drive growth in Chicago," said WBC President & CEO Jeff Malehorn. "We are fortunate to have strong and engaged anchor institutions, and a diverse and robust local business community; uniting these key players will create jobs and economic growth throughout our region."

CASE is made possible by contributions from member anchor institutions, and a grant from the Polk Bros. Foundation. Anchor institutions can include educational institutions, hospitals and health care centers, civic institutions, government, and large corporations, especially those headquartered in the Chicago region. CASE will add anchor institution members throughout the course of 2014.

"We are pleased to support CASE with a launch grant because we believe that the purchasing power of these anchor institutions can significantly benefit Chicago's communities, foster balanced development, generate local jobs, and result in a stronger local business economy," said the Polk Bros. Foundation CEO Gillian Darlow.

WBC will partner with consulting group, Next Street (nationally recognized for its success with anchor institutions and small and medium business development) to develop and launch the program. Additional support will be provided by a group of leading organizations focused on community and neighborhood economic growth.

Participating businesses will be chosen based on criteria set by the participating anchor institutions, and Next Street. These criteria include: a local presence, product alignment with anchor procurement needs, and a proven track record indicating strong likelihood of success as an anchor supplier.

For more information, visit [www.worldbusinesschicago.com/CASE](http://www.worldbusinesschicago.com/CASE).

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*[World Business Chicago \(WBC\)](#) leads Chicago's business retention, attraction and expansion efforts and raises the city's position as a premier global business destination. Chaired by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, WBC fosters private sector growth through the advancement of a business-friendly environment that attracts world class talent, and is responsible for the implementation of [Chicago's Plan for Economic Growth and Jobs](#).*

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