



Advisory Council on

Advisory Council on Utility Supplier and Workforce Diversity

Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, September 10, 2019

Location: Pepco, 701 9th Street, NW – 2nd Floor Conference Room

Time: 4:00 pm - 5:15 pm

The Advisory Council on Utility Supplier and Workforce Diversity (Advisory Council) serves as an independent, executive level body that provides advice and recommendations to the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia (Commission) on areas related to improving diversity and inclusion among utility suppliers in the District. The Advisory Council shall be comprised of representatives from public utilities, contractors, trade associations, local colleges and universities, and industry stakeholders.

The Advisory Council serves as a liaison between the utility workforce and the Commission. They will be providing recommendations on best practices and examining results on supplier and workforce diversity issues.

September Kick-off Meeting

Call to Order

Chairman Willie L. Phillips of the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia called a quorum of the Advisory Council on Utility Supplier and Workforce Diversity. He expressed his intent on bringing the parties together to have the most impact and influence on improving the current state of workforce and supplier diversity.

Opening Remarks

Opening remarks were given by several Advisory Council members whom all expressed an interest and need for supplier and workforce diversity, the need to bring together a group of diverse community stakeholders, and the need to develop a workforce for the future.

Topics presented to start the discussion on workforce and supplier diversity included: economic inclusion, apprenticeship/internship programs, data and statistics related to disadvantaged small business firms and accessibility of information.

Discussion – “What’s the Issue? – Framing the conversation on Supplier and Workforce Diversity”

1. Intentionally facing the challenges associated with supplier and workforce diversity

- Creating more Certified Small business firms that specifically focus on the District of Columbia
- Intentionally utilizing small minority businesses
- Creating more apprenticeship programs and expanding programs that already exist
- Formulating creative methods to consistently engage with partners and vendors
- Making sure that bids are positioned on a leveled playing field so that all have a fair opportunity to bid for projects.
- Expanding the pool among diverse and disadvantaged businesses
- Providing more opportunities for residents to increase wages through growth and talent expansion
- Breaking the barriers that prevent workforce expansion
- Following the bidding process, companies that were not selected should have the opportunity to receive direct feedback about how to improve and become more competitive when competing for future bids

2. Awareness – Ensuring that those tasked with making important decisions are aware of the issues that plague minority and disadvantaged businesses that work in utilities.

- Acknowledging the need for consistent engagement with utility companies on all levels and ensuring that advisory members assess the problems that affect them
- Analyzing the shortage of Certified Business Enterprises (CBE) in the District that are directly linked to utility and supplier diversity (the construction business was noted as one of the industries)
- Understanding that some small/minority businesses lose out on the opportunity to bid because of loopholes and issues with ensuring compliance.
- The labor force is fading out, which is widening the gap on qualified workers that are suitable to hire
- Ensuring that individuals throughout the District have access to information, training, and apprenticeship programs
- Understanding that funding is a major issue when considering workforce diversity
- Understanding that technology plays a role in attracting talent
- Examining the shortage of workers creating ways to improve the labor force over the next decade through infrastructure
- Implementing workforce training programs that will train and equip workers properly

- Acknowledging that there is an opportunity to increase the diversity in the Utility industry

3. Increasing Diversity in the Future – How can this be achieved

- Long term commitments
- Effectively measuring how well a program worked
- Training Certified Business Enterprises and local businesses
- Reward utilities on successful outcomes and give incentives for making progress
- Qualify and measure outcomes to determine how to make progress
- Creating processes that don't have a disparate impact on minority and disadvantaged groups
- Full-scale training programs
- Ensuring that information is accessible
- Continuing education/training post hire
- Utilizing the pipeline to incorporate all types of students
- Creating programs that allow individuals that are re-entering the workforce to receive training and adequate consideration for utility jobs
- Creating a pipeline from DC Public Schools, Colleges, trade programs and Universities that lead to a variety of utility firms
- Providing Incentives for small/disadvantaged firms
- Forecasting the future
- Mentorship/Apprenticeship programs
- Building partnerships with local schools to make sure that students are being trained to compete

Roundtable Discussion

After the opening remarks and introduction into the conversation on supplier and workforce diversity, the Chairman opened the floor for the roundtable discussion. The roundtable allowed for Advisory partners to discuss challenges, express concerns, and spark conversation among other partners on the steps that can be taken to reach the goal of diversity.

Below are the suggestions and feedback extracted from the conversation.

1. Creating an apprenticeship Program – giving access not only to people in the community that are qualified but to those that generally will not have the ability or resources to progress forward.
2. Building and improving the current infrastructure, resources and programs that are already in place more so than creating new ones to solve these issues; no need to reinvent the wheel.

3. Creating a 10-year program for infrastructure solely to support the increase in diversity and workforce development. Multiple decades are necessary to contribute to a growing community.
4. The creation of real jobs that contribute to sustainable and healthy growing businesses.
5. The creation and utilization of an effective pipeline program.
6. Maintaining capacity to expand businesses as Certified Business Enterprises
7. Creating a procurement assistance program.
8. Expanding opportunities to returning citizens with no barrier to entry – returning citizens are having issues getting security clearances for rural jobs.
9. Expanding and rehabilitating workforce development.
10. Consideration for workforce development must include both traditional and non-traditional students.
11. Implementing a program that provides incentives for small, minority and/or disadvantaged business.
12. When Minority and Disadvantaged companies are contracted, long term commitments may assist them with employee retention and training opportunities.
13. Reaching as far back as the District of Columbia Public School system.
14. Implementing a job readiness program that provides continuous support and training opportunities.
15. Ensuring that businesses have access to information regarding how to acquire capital to effectively fund their establishments.