

Port Of Seattle Advances Diversity In Contracting And Workforce Development Goals

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Building on recent work to drive equity and inclusion in Port contracting and workforce development, Port of Seattle Commissioners took formal action to further create a foundation for a diverse economy with a focus on industries necessary to support Port capital construction and wider economic vitality throughout the region.

“These goals and achievements show that the Port of Seattle is on the right track, and we are doubling down on our efforts as we move forward,” said Port of Seattle Commission President Stephanie Bowman. “The Port of Seattle is committed to providing equity to WMBE firms doing business in the region.”

During a recent Commission meeting, Commissioners were briefed on the early results of implementing the Port’s Diversity in Contracting initiative. They also received a briefing on a progress report by the Port towards increasing diversity among WMBE firms on port procurements during 2018. A panel of experts in business inclusion and diversity recommended that the Port continue its path of public accountability and building a pipeline for youth.

“The Port of Seattle has created a viable roadmap to improving ethnic diversity in its contracting. Setting specific goals for each division makes the Port more accountable and the workplan makes the goals achievable. This Diversity in Contracting initiative makes it more likely that all businesses will have the opportunity to work and grow,” said Henry Yates, Public Affairs Chair for Tabor 100.

“Increasing business development diversity requires transparency, accountability, and real tools to help teams expand recruitment and training. The accountability and tools in the Diversity and Contracting annual report are outstanding. They provide a solid foundation built on community input and sound testing. This community is ready to continue working with the Port to stay publicly accountable, continue innovating, and keep attracting young people to Port-related industries,” said Regina Glenn, president of Pacific Communications Consultants Inc. and a long-time adviser on diversity in business development.

An additional aspect to the Port’s economic equity efforts include the creation of the Workforce Development Special Committee, chaired by Commissioners Stephanie Bowman and Ryan Calkins, which will be chartered to review the Century Agenda strategy associated with workforce development, to review and make recommendations for updating the Port’s workforce development policy and the five-year strategic plan. The committee will also provide recommendations for the development of a feasibility study around a maritime high school, and related business plan.

“To further promote the family-wage jobs maritime careers provide throughout our region, we should explore the feasibility of a maritime high school,” said Calkins. “If we have an aviation high school, why not a similar maritime facility for those students who want to explore that career path?”

“In a part of the world where rivers and oceans are central to our culture, a maritime high school and career-connected learning plan is an exciting education option that can develop the next generation of mariners, and maritime innovators while learning from some of the oldest traditions in the Pacific Northwest.

This will be the first year for the Workforce Development Committee. The timing coincides with the fourth year of the current five-year strategic plan and five years after adoption of a motion on “Increasing Workforce Development and Career Opportunities Activities” on July 1, 2014. The five-year strategic plan and the motion have guided workforce development efforts at the Port.

The Diversity in Contracting (DC) policy directive requires department/division directors to develop WMBE aspirational goals, and to conduct affirmative efforts to achieve the set goals as part of their annual performance evaluation. This includes a 2019 Port-wide WMBE aspirational goal of 12.4 percent WMBE goals.

For 2019, in support of the department/division WMBE goals, the Diversity in Contracting Department (DCD) is providing workshops, outreach communication to WMBE firms tailored towards those department/division’s opportunities, prime and WMBE meet and greet sessions, and the expansion of the number of WMBE businesses within the Port’s new Supplier Database.