

Raimondo announces goal to boost minority businesses

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GOVERNMENT

PROVIDENCE – Gov. Gina M. Raimondo announced on Thursday a new performance goal to expand economic opportunity by doubling the Minority Business Enterprise utilization rate for state contracts by 2020.

To that end, she signed two executive orders creating a Diversity in Construction Working Group and an Office of Diversity, Equity and Opportunity Advisory Council to reinforce these efforts.

“We’ve made progress in opening doors for minority-owned and women-owned businesses, as well as businesses owned by people with certified disabilities, but it’s not enough,” Raimondo said in a statement. “We need a system that is fair across the board, and we need supports in place that further encourages activity in our diverse economy. Today, I’m setting a firm goal and making strides to ensure Rhode Island is leveling the playing field for those who want to conduct business in this state.”

Urban Ventures Executive Director Jr. Neville Songwe said Rhode Island can only grow if it supports “a vibrant small business community.”

“Successful enterprises can come from all kinds of backgrounds given the right support. Urban Ventures is thankful to Governor Raimondo for working to expand opportunities for community businesses to make their mark on Rhode Island’s economy,” Songwe said.

An estimated 4 percent of the state’s procurement dollars were awarded to minority and women business enterprises in fiscal years 2014 and 2015.

In fiscal 2016, due to policy changes within the R.I. Department of Administration’s Office of Diversity, Equity and Opportunity, the estimate climbed to 6.3 percent.

Raimondo’s goal is to raise the utilization rate to 12 percent by the year 2020.

“The ODEO is excited about today’s announcement to further support the minority business community,” ODEO Associate Director Cheryl Burrell said. “The governor has already made significant progress to promote opportunities for this community, and now she’s taking more action to invest in our success.”