



**Business Enterprise Program
Council for Minorities, Females and Persons with Disabilities**

Monday, June 22, 2020

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

MONTHLY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

LOCATION: Webex

100 W. Randolph
Room 2-025
Chicago, IL 60601

401 S. Spring St
Room 500 ½
Springfield, IL 62706

COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Alex Bautista; Bola Delano; Emilia DiMenco; Beth Doria; Karen Eng; Janel Forde; Larry Ivory; Jesse Martinez; Sharron Matthews; Jorge Perez; Hedy Ratner; Sharla Roberts

COUNCIL MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Denise Barreto; Jaime di Paulo; Edward McKinnie; Kaney Frances O'Neil

COUNCIL CHAIR

Janel Forde

COUNCIL SECRETARY

Radhika Lakhani

CMS STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Kori Acosta; Steve Booth; Jeanetta Cardine; Michelle Casey; John Donato; Terrence Glavin; Carlos Gutierrez; Radhika Lakhani; Reginald Lampkin; Kenisha Leak; Irma Lopez; Mike Merchant; Art Moore; Elias Ricks Ngwayah II; Pedro Pineda; Krysti Rinaldi; Harry Reinhard; Jeanine Robinson; Margaret vanDijk; Shirley Webb; Ron Wilson;

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

N/A

In accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120) and the
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BEP Council for Minorities, Females and Persons with Disabilities



PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS

Business Enterprise Council for Minorities, Females, and Persons with Disabilities

AGENDA

Monday, June 22, 2020

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Location: [Webex Event](#)

Webex Event Number (access code): 133-956-5180

Password: KfKhWmhw822

Join by phone +1-415-655-0002 US Toll

- I. Welcome
- II. Call to Order
- III. Roll Call
- IV. Approval of Minutes for BEP Council Meeting held on February 24, 2020
- V. Chair's Report
 - COVID-19 Outreach
 - BEP Certification Workshops
 - BEP "Procurement Chats" Webinars
 - Other Outreach Initiatives
 - Call for PPE Vendors
 - Fast Track Certification
 - Backlog
- VI. Subcommittee Reports
 - Certification Subcommittee Report
 - Outreach Subcommittee Report
 - Compliance Subcommittee Report
- VII. Ongoing Business
 - Update on Disparity Study

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- Update on Dispute Resolution
- Sheltered Market

VIII. New Business

- Outreach Initiatives
 - Road Show
 - Procurement Chat Webinars
 - Insurance Webinar
 - Partnership Webinar Series
- Certification Initiatives
 - Backlog Update
 - Fast Track Certification
 - Certification Workshop Webinars
 - Top five (5) common application mistakes

IX. Public/Vendor's Testimony

X. Adjournment

- Next Subcommittee Meetings
 - Certification Subcommittee Meeting – Monday, July 27, 2020
 - Outreach Subcommittee Meeting – Tuesday, July 28, 2020
 - Compliance Subcommittee Meeting – Wednesday, July 29, 2020
- Next Council Meeting. – Monday, August 24, 2020

BEP [Outreach Events](#)

Note: There will be no IPB Notices and Solicitations Reports for this meeting.

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STATE OF ILLINOIS

Business Enterprise Council for Minorities, Females, and Persons with Disabilities

100 W. Randolph
Room 2-025
Chicago, IL 60601

401 S. Spring St
Room 500 ½
Springfield, IL 62706

MINUTES

Monday, June 22, 2020

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

I. Welcome

Director Forde clarified that today's meeting is in compliance with Open Meetings Act COVID-19 guidance issued by Illinois Attorney General's office. She welcomed everyone and remarked how lovely it is seeing them, some after a long time. She stated it has been a while and there is a lot to be covered, including several updates. Director Forde said she hoped they were excited to be joining with them and to hear about the progress they have made.

Director Forde first acknowledged and congratulated Member Barreto for her recent appointment as the inaugural Director of Equity and Inclusion for Cook County, where she is responsible for coordinating and integrating racial and equity principles into Cook County Operations.

Director Forde commented on how as we enter Summer 2020 it is fair to say that we live in unprecedented times. She said it appears to have come to an inflection point where it seems change is different, and it feels like the conversations are different. Director Forde stated that even before the beginning of the year, CMS and BEP set 2020 goals which were shared with many present, while at the same time dealing with COVID-19 just as everyone else has. She outlined that they have putting in a lot of effort into those goals and want to make sure to share that progress with everyone. Director Forde pointed out that it is not lost on them that they are dealing with a number of pandemics, COVID-19 which has disproportionately impacted minority-owned businesses, and the virus and pandemic of systemic racism and social injustice which must also be fought and is their job to do every day.

Director Forde stated that while personally challenged given the day or the hour, she is excited that this team gets to stand up and support the BEP vendor community and hopes they will see

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that they have done even more than they have traditionally done and planned at the beginning of 2020 because they appreciate that they have to be a resource, stand up and be relevant.

- II. Call to Order – Director Forde called the meeting to order at 1:39 p.m.
- III. Roll Call – Radhika Lakhani carried out roll call. Quorum was established.
- IV. Approval of Minutes for Council Meeting held on February 24, 2020

Director Forde motioned for approval of the minutes. Member DiMenco seconded the motion. All agreed.

Chair's Report – Janel Forde

➤ COVID-19 Outreach

Director Forde reported that they have stepped-up on outreach to vendors to provide guidance on resources. She said that vendors are provided with a Monday message each week with information on grants, loan opportunities, and other resources available through various city, state, federal and county agencies as well as private opportunities. She added that the Monday message is an opportunity to consolidate and share these resources with the vendor community in as timely a manner as possible. Director Forde highlighted that at the end of Ms. Lopez's presentation there will be an email and link to register for the weekly message.

➤ BEP Certification Workshops

Director Forde announced that the BEP team established weekly webinars under the leadership of Carlos Gutierrez, the Certification Manager, to help vendors and provide outreach opportunities for them to have their questions answered because they appreciate that the last thing a vendor wants is to become ineligible to become a part of any vendor pool, and certainly the BEP vendor pool at this time.

Director Forde further explained that Outreach and Certification launched three distinct webinar series on how to become certified with the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). She said the reason this is so important is they know that black and brown businesses have been and will continue to be impacted as a function of COVID-19. Director Forde stated they wanted to make clear and as easy as possible for vendors who may not have thought about becoming vendors through the State's procurement process and vendors who may have let their registration lapse, that they wanted to make it a point to encourage them back into their vendor portfolio and that they are also making it easier to understand what opportunities may be available to them. She reaffirmed that these webinars assist vendors in the application process, address any questions they may have and include links to state procurement bulletins and agencies providing support to the

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business owner. Director Forde said they are held every Friday with specific topics on a rotating basis. She listed they demonstrate how to complete a full certification application or no change affidavit.

Director Forde added so that everyone knows that they had started to do a lot of these webinars and informational sessions months ago and will continue for the foreseeable future as long as there is a demand to make sure vendors and potential vendors have access to this information and to help facilitate the application process.

Director Forde added that in response to the challenges many vendors experienced in obtaining certain documents to complete their applications due to the COVID-19 closures, BEP responded by temporarily waiving certain requirements needed for certification. She reported that BEP extended the certification of those businesses that were due to expire during the stay at home order and will look to extending that grace period if necessary .

➤ BEP “Procurement Chat” Webinars

Director Forde announced that the other piece they are excited about is the “Procurement Chat” webinars. She explained that Irma Lopez, Outreach Manager, launched short weekly 30-minute presentations with experts in state and government procurement based on very specific subjects of interest to their vendor population to help them understand the procurement process, agency needs and any helpful information. She said past “Procurement Chats” have been with CMS, DoIT, the Capital Development Board, Department of Corrections, IDPH, this week on June 24th will be the Department of Human Resources, and the week of July 1st will be the University of Illinois Procurement with Sharla Roberts.

➤ Other Outreach Initiatives

Director Forde underscored that the take away is that they are trying to meet people where the need exists, to be relevant and serve people in ways that can be understood and digested. She added that hopefully they will be relevant to them in providing these resources during this time. Director Forde announced that they have an insurance webinar coming up in response to their vendors, small vendors in particular –protesting is one thing, looting is another, and they are not the same groups of people– but to the extent that businesses have been physically impacted as a function of some of the activities that have happened. She added that they wanted to be thoughtful about what types of insurance should businesses think about having in light of the new COVID response world. Director Forde said they are calling it their Webinar Partnership Series which they will host together with other entities to provide insight to different audiences. She announced that one is with the BLC, Business Leadership Council and Ms. Lavelle which they will be hearing about soon.

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➤ Call for PPE Vendors

Director Forde described that north of 600 vendors were contacted based on their code types who may have been in a position to provide PPE or other similar goods and services related to the State's response to COVID-19. She stated that many responded, and their information was shared with their BOSS (Bureau of Strategic Sourcing) team, who together with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) lead the State's effort in response to COVID-19. Director Forde revealed that these calls and emails lead to 35 different contracts with BEP vendors, but more are desired to which later today the contact information for more vendors to participate will be shared.

Director Forde added that CMS and BEP have playing a very active role in the procurement process and in particular the procurement process for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as a response to the State's fight against COVID-19. She stated they absolutely want to ensure that as many BEP vendors as possible are able to participate in this procurement opportunity. Director Forde asked firstly that if a vendor is able to provide PPE but is not certified, to call and there is a way for them to get into the BEP vendor portfolio sooner rather than later. Secondly, she said they want to make sure they are looking internally first, therefore she requested that if anyone listening knows of a business that can provide contact facing, medical gowns, nitrile gloves, hand sanitizer, N95 masks, disinfectant wipes, the email address is COVID.PROCUREMENT@illinois.gov. Director Forde stated she wanted everyone to know how serious they are about securing PPE, supporting the BEP vendor pool, but also connecting the dots for vendors who can provide PPE, but are not currently BEP certified.

➤ Fast Track Certification

Director Forde stated Mr. Gutierrez will discuss this further, but they are proud and excited to announce the Fast Track Certification process. She said it was first publicized at their Juneteenth event on Friday which was kicked off by the Lt. Governor, Julianna Stratton who spoke of the importance Black Entrepreneurship and wealth creation. Director Forde stated they had great panelists, Ms. Lavelle, the Executive Director of the Business Leadership Council, Mr. Herb Stokes of the Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council, and Mr. Jonathan McGee, Deputy Director of Regional Economic Development for DCEO. She reported that it was a great discussion and Assistant Director Mr. Mike Merchant was moderator. Director Forde added they were excited to announce to the Governor and Lt. Governor that they would be able to launch Fast Track Certification on July 1, 2020. She said it will address the BEP Act's call for reciprocity and they will have a program which with one affidavit will be able to recognize certifications from the City of Chicago and Cook County. Director Forde outlined this is an expedited certification process with a full 7-day turnaround allowing vendors to be added quickly with minimal paperwork.

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- Backlog
Discussed in item VII.

Director Forde gave the floor to Michelle Casey, Executive Director for the Executive Ethics Commission. Ms. Casey thanked Director Forde and other members of the Council for having her. She explained that her office has the directive to appoint 4 chief procurement officers (CPOs). Ms. Casey announced that the new CPO for Higher Education to succeed Ben Bagby is John Donato. She outlined he was the Chief of Procurement at the Illinois Tollway Authority and that his 5-year term begins July 1, 2020. Ms. Casey gave the floor to him.

Mr. Donato thanked Ms. Casey, Director Forde and the Council members. He stated he is looking forward to starting on July 1 and added he has over 15 years of experience purchasing for the State of Illinois. Mr. Donato said he was at the Tollway for 9 years. He stated spending about 6 months at the Ethics Commission. He mentioned he was Deputy Director at CMS BOSS (Bureau of Strategic Sourcing), so he did spend some time at CMS. Mr. Donato said he also spent 4 years as Purchasing Office at the Environmental Protection Agency. He stated he is looking forward to working on the university side and developing great relationships with the universities and CMS. He said he is also looking forward to working with Mike Merchant and have a collaborative effort to enhance participation in the whole university system. Mr. Donato thanked Governor Pritzker and Director Forde for the expedited certification process which he said will be a great new initiative leading to more vendors in the pool. Director Forde thanked Mr. Donato and Director Casey. She stated they look forward to working with Mr. Donato to expand the net for vendors, partnership and new ideas.

V. Subcommittee Reports

- Certification Subcommittee Report – Chair Sharla Roberts

Chair Roberts thanked Director Forde for her report. She communicated that they held an appeal hearing on May 22nd where they allowed one vendor to participate in the exception process. She said they also held a meeting on May 29th where they overturned 2 decisions and upheld 2 decisions. Chair Roberts reported that have 3 more appeals to be heard in their upcoming June 26th meeting. She thanked Mr. Gutierrez and the certification team for the great work they are doing with the Fast Track process, pointing out that it will be good for their vendors and the program.

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➤ Outreach Subcommittee Report – Chair Emilia DiMenco

Chair DiMenco stated their last meeting was scheduled for March 24th which was days after the shelter in place order was put in place and their next meeting is scheduled for July 28th, so they have no new information to report.

➤ Compliance Subcommittee Report – Chair Sharla Roberts

Chair Roberts reported they had a meeting which was cancelled with no meetings scheduled in between, so they have nothing to report, and their next meeting is scheduled the day after Outreach on July 29th.

VI. Ongoing Business

➤ Update on Disparity Study

Mr. Merchant reported that CMS continues to move forward with their RFP process. He said they are looking to have the upcoming Disparity Study RFP very soon and are therefore very limited in the details they can provide. He assured everyone that they are exploring all the options to ensure it is a comprehensive study conducted in an expedient and economically prudent manner. Mr. Merchant affirmed it would be in the next few weeks after some final conversations.

➤ Update on Dispute Resolution

Ms. Lakhani reported they currently have 3 disputes, referred by BEP, at the Bureau of Administrative Hearing. She stated that ongoing matters will not be discussed by CMS, BEP nor at Council meetings, but they can report that the matters are moving through the process and they are encouraged by the participation of the parties and the updates they have been receiving. Ms. Lakhani commented on another note that the dispute resolution pilot program was established and implemented by CMS BEP after many calls by the vendors involved and the Council to resolve these issues. She added that 2 of the 3 cases were before the Council for a number of years on end and believes they should be resolved sometime within the next few weeks to next few months. She said by establishing the dispute resolution process the parties and Council can expect clear establishment of the facts at hand, the issue to be resolved and to participate in a hearing which will lead to a recommendation of the remedy to be established.

➤ Sheltered Market

Mr. Merchant announced they invited their colleagues from DoIT to give a brief update on the sheltered market they had initiated. Mr. Reginal Lampkin stated that DoIT hosted a PRISM bid opening on May 28th but did not receive as many responses as they had expected and assume it was because of the COVID-19 state shutdown. He reported they are currently working through the administrative review of the received responses. Mr. Lampkin affirmed

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that DoIT is preparing for the next publication early in fiscal year 2021 and will have an update once that transpires.

Member Roberts explained that they had gone through a process where they gave information to UIC students to work on how the Council deemed which categories could be sheltered markets. She asked that in light of the effect of the challenges that are currently impacting black and brown communities, how are they looking at the sheltered market vehicle to see how they can remedy some of these disparities. She stated that the last time they spoke it was in UIC's hands on how they determined it. Member Roberts said that during the previous administration she could not see what analytics they performed but knows they approved the sheltered market for marketing or such. She asked how do they plan to move forward and whether it was still in UIC's hands.

Director Forde outlined that there are two different streams to Member Robert's question. She said one is the disparity study used to identify or confirm the need for a sheltered market and the UIC study, the Capstone Project. She explained they did a capstone project with UIC to provide insight and recommendations around BEP and disparity study. Director Forde gave the floor to Mr. Elias Ngwayah to give them an update on the first part of her question, followed by Mr. Merchant to provide an update on the second part of her question.

Mr. Ngwayah reported that the Capstone Project was presented to BEP in May and several observations and recommendations were made. He said that one was to reach out to the vendor pool to solicit more responses from them. He stated that another recommendation is being worked on by the BEP Team regarding many misconceptions about BEP that are out there, such as the misconception that BEP handles contracts. Mr. Ngwayah said he did not have the recommendations with him, but the team has been meeting to address some of them.

Mr. Merchant informed the Council that one of the things they want to focus on with the Capstone report was developing a shortened process for creating the categories. He said that unfortunately due to some of the COVID-19 issues they had to change some of what was the focus of the study. He said what they are focusing on right now and is the reason it is taking a bit longer for their actual disparity study is they are looking for ways to include that type of information in their upcoming disparity study. Mr. Merchant said they are looking at things like health care and professional services. He added that is one of the things slowing down their timeline for that.

Member Roberts asked Director Forde for a copy of that report. Director Forde replied that Mr. Ngwayah would follow-up with her and that their next steps after the meeting is to have that as an action item. Director Forde gave the floor to Member Ivory.

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Member Ivory stated he had a number of questions and would go down the line and try to make his comments short. He said on the disparity resolution he believes that the Council and leadership of CMS has done a great job and thinks it is important that they maintain what he believes is the integrity and great confidence in each other. He stated belief that everyone wants to abide by the rules. Member Ivory said there are clear guidelines on dispute resolution and what needs to happen before it becomes official which were not abided by in that they were not brought to the Council for approval. He affirmed that is an important issue and wants to be clear that once rules of engagement and a process is established for dispute resolution that those be followed.

Director Forde responded she would defer to Member Roberts, Chair of the Compliance Subcommittee and Radhika Lakhani, Deputy General Counsel for BEP and BOSS, however in terms of process there has been nothing done in darkness. She clarified that every matter that was referred through the process have been matters that were before the Council for months and in some cases years without resolution and she would argue with minimal to no progress. Director Forde outlined the need to trust a process and be as transparent as possible. She added that a lot was brought to the Council that did not move forward and that the contours of what a dispute resolution process would look like were discussed at previous Council meetings. Director Forde stated that short of COVID, there may have been a dispute resolution process update, but that nothing has been done in darkness nor to advance a process without the Council's knowledge. She gave the floor to Member Roberts and Ms. Lakhani.

Member Roberts thanked Chair Forde. She said she would like for the dispute resolution process to be discussed at the next Compliance Subcommittee meeting. Chair Forde agreed.

Ms. Lakhani reassured the Council that if the process comes to a conclusion they would like to invite any of the members to participate and ask questions of both parties when presenting their case to the Administrative Law Judge, who will in turn issue a recommendation to the Council. She stated that pursuant to their rules and statute, enforcement mechanisms need to be approved by the Council, but in this case they are simply establishing a record so that these decisions are not made based on three minutes of testimony or perhaps conversations that happened with certain Council members and not others. Ms. Lakhani said they wanted to make sure that the agency and Council members had all the information necessary. Without going into detail on ongoing matters, she explained that when they have something final to report they will, but they have not received any invitations yet because no hearing has yet been scheduled. Ms. Lakhani added that she is happy to participate and provide an update and detailed description of the process at the next Compliance Subcommittee meeting, and to continue to provide updates

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at the Council meetings. Chair Forde commented that as a formal action item as they intended to do is to follow-up with the Council, report out the process as it's happening and do an update to solicit feedback from the Council and answer any questions they may have. Ms. Lakhani agreed. Member Roberts thanked Chair Forde and apologized for having technical difficulties and being knocked off the system.

VII. New Business

➤ Outreach Initiatives

Director Forde introduced Irma Lopez, Outreach Manager to discuss current outreach efforts which have been turned up to a super-high notch. She stated Ms. Lopez would be followed by Carlos Gutierrez, Certification Manager reporting on a super-high note with regards to the historical backlog and on the Fast Track certification process.

Ms. Lopez thanked Director Forde for her beautiful comments and noted she is a very hard act to follow. Ms. Lopez outlined that with their outreach strategy they work very closely with different organizations and agencies making up a list of over 100 partnerships. She said the content of these events imparts economic support resources, such as current or long-term grants, loans and funding opportunities for vendors and small businesses.

○ Road Show

Ms. Lopez explained that the Road Show events are aligned with the Illinois Department of Economic Opportunities' (DCEO) regional approach. She related that this is where her relationships with the SBDCs' and PTAC come into play as they are most often her co-hosts and they work together to provide a robust program. Ms. Lopez noted they also do industry-specific events that are relevant to that region itself. She detailed that regional representatives touch upon items that are specific as well as to state, city, county and federal opportunities.

Ms. Lopez stated they have virtual and in-person Road Show events. She discussed that the virtual events are new process that they are still learning and tuning up but have had much success with. She described that they usually have a government representative, such as the local mayor or someone from the local economic development organization join the panel discussion. Ms. Lopez added they usually have a representative from the regional DCEO or Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) come out, a BEP prime and sub-contractor vendor to discuss their best practices on working together, and a state procurement representative on the panel. She highlighted that she works with the BEP Compliance Division to identify agencies with considerable spend in that area to encourage a representative from their purchasing team to attend, speak to vendors, ideally join the panel and

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discuss regional purchasing practices. She noted that the panel then opens to questions.

Ms. Lopez described that the in-person events are a little more involved, having exhibit booths with local government representatives, local chambers of commerce and economic development organizations, larger primes and companies who come to get to know BEP vendors. She said that first and foremost what they want is for their BEP vendors to come out and share their capability statements and hopefully create a relationship where they will be called upon to subcontract with the larger companies. Ms. Lopez said they also have a panel discussion and additionally a BEP certification workshop and 2 break-out sessions. She stated that in these sessions the DCEO comes out to explain the GATA process and SAMs which is now required for anyone applying for a grant and funding.

- Procurement Chat Webinars

Ms. Lopez headlined that their Procurement Chats occurring every week bring in a different agency procurement officer to speak to their specific processes and opportunities with their agency. She noted the application assistance webinars that walk vendors step-by-step through the process and allows for them to ask questions. Ms. Lopez detailed that the Procurement Chats take place every Wednesday from 3-3:30 p.m. and the application assistance webinars take place every Friday from 2-3 p.m. She said the great thing about these webinars is they take you step-by-step through the actual online process.

Ms. Lopez explained that the BEP Procurement Chat webinars are their chance to demonstrate the utility of the BEP credential. She stated that oftentimes vendors become certified and wonder what comes next. Ms. Lopez stated these webinars bridge that gap and offer vendors instruction on ways to engage in the procurement process. She said all chats feature four elements; information on future agency opportunities, overview of the selection process, demonstration of best practices for participating with specific agencies and how to develop a sub and prime relationship. Ms. Lopez mentioned that these webinars also inform vendors that they are not limited to the role of subprime. She said if you are in the capacity to come in as a prime, that helps the agencies and the state in general to increase diversity spend. Ms. Lopez explained that every week they invite a new guest speaker. She added that Member Roberts graciously accepted to speak July 1st about purchasing practices with the University of Illinois.

- Insurance Webinar

Ms. Lopez stated that topical webinars provide vendors critical and timely support based on current events. She highlighted that with the Director's help and leadership they were able to create a webinar on re-opening for business in Phase 3

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of Restore Illinois. Ms. Lopez said they had an impressive group of panelists for this webinar in partnership with DCEO and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). She listed Jonathan McGee Regional Director for DCEO, Matthew Simpson, African American Business Development Manager for DCEO, and Judy Kauerauf, Communicable Disease Section Chief for IDPH.

- Partnership Webinar Series

Ms. Lopez reported that as the Director announced, BEP is looking to partner with certain organizations to recruit diverse vendors. She said they hope that the Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council (CMSDC), the Women's Business Development Center, their DBE vendors and more partner vendors would consider joining with them to do something like FastTrack certification which is a shorter process and also free. Ms. Lopez recognized the CMSDC for partnering with them for years to host a bi-monthly certification workshop which has been well received. She highlighted that they have added a colleague from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to speak on their specific purchasing practices. Ms. Lopez added that a representative from Goldman Sachs also speaks about their 10,000 Businesses program. She remarked that the workshop has developed and evolved to bring very impactful information to their vendors. She said they hope to also present to other organizations and join forces with them in a Fast Track style process. Ms. Lopez encouraged their recognition partners to please contact Mr. Merchant or Mr. Ngwayah to discuss the proposal as these organizations and vendors would greatly benefit.

Additionally, Ms. Lopez thanked Pedro Pineda, Outreach Coordinator, without whom this Webex event would not be possible and for all his support without which the Outreach Division would not be able to accomplish half as much as they do. She acknowledged the leadership of Director Forde for pushing them beyond what they believed was their limit and providing the guidance, support and unending resources provided to them. Ms. Lopez also recognized their partners on which they rely on in what is a group effort and stated looking forward to continuing those relationships. She expressed the desire to present to their organizations and encouraged them to call upon them when needed.

Director Forde thanked Ms. Lopez and stated she did a great job outlining some of what they have been brewing behind the scenes and implementing. She pointed out that she wanted BEP to be relevant, support vendors where they are and to meet their needs. She said one of the needs was for information, to understand process and how to better understand, contract and engage with the State. Director Forde stated these are all baseline items and she challenged the team to think differently about how they do that. She said that what they have heard today is an indication of what they have been doing and she hopes that has been well-received. Director

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Forde underscored three things that Ms. Lopez discussed. She emphasized that if they have not been partnering in the past, they should do that now. She proclaimed that if anyone knows of someone they should be partnering with to please send that information to Mr. Merchant and Mr. Ngwayah. Director Forde pointed out that they intentionally presented the topical webinar on how to return to work right before the City of Chicago reopened on June 3rd. She said the insurance webinar is another one that is on topic and if there are any others that could be helpful to BEP vendors they are happy to consider that. Director Forde stated that another idea that has been important to them is that of capacity building. She said that their answer on how to do that may be different than it was 6 months ago due to COVID-19, but they are always open to ideas on how to build capacity.

➤ Certification Initiatives

- Backlog Update
Mr. Gutierrez thanked Director Forde for her leadership in reducing their backlog. He reported that in January it was at 400, down to now under 40 and they have been certifying vendors at a quicker rate.
- Fast Track Certification
Mr. Gutierrez described that FastTrack Certification is an online application process. He announced that for those with Cook County or City of Chicago certifications, processing is completed within 7 days and then they would be ready to compete for State contracts.
- Certification Workshop Webinars
Mr. Gutierrez reported that the application process is reviewed in detail during the weekly Certification webinars. He added that they also go over the annual renewal or No Change Affidavit process for those already certified. Mr. Gutierrez described that the application process is gone over section by section and all questions are answered. He said typical errors are addressed and the webinars last one hour.
- Top five (5) common application mistakes
Mr. Gutierrez detailed the 5 most common application errors. He related that for evidence of ethnicity, some people state all they have is their summary birth certificate. He said they may also provide a signed statement claiming their ethnicity as part of the application process.

Another mistake Mr. Gutierrez highlighted is with proof of contribution. He explained this item relates to the seed money used to start up your business. Mr. Gutierrez explained this can be the fee paid to the Secretary of State or the money

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spent when registering with the County as sole proprietor. He stated the other part of the answer to this question is the amount and where did the money come from.

The 3rd mistake Mr. Gutierrez pointed out is with bank signature authority. He explained that this item asks that all signatories be named. With the advent of digital authorization, Mr. Gutierrez observed that some banks treat this as proprietary information. He advised that the way to remedy this is to go to your bank and obtain a signed statement listing all the authorized signatories on the business account.

The next mistake Mr. Gutierrez addressed was with licenses. He said this item could be very tricky depending on the vendors city or town, because there are some that don't require licensing. Mr. Gutierrez stated that the City of Chicago most often requires licenses, while some municipalities do not.

The 5th issue Mr. Gutierrez pointed out was with financial statements. He described that the tricky part about financial statements is that when you start a business the balance sheet states zero assets. Mr. Gutierrez said the way to answer that question is to report the total assets liability in terms of what is the total sum of the balance sheet. He stated that if there is none you can always put a zero. Mr. Gutierrez added that additional resources on individuals available to assist you are provided in the webinars. He thanked the Director for her leadership, her goal of moving them forward, increasing vendor participation and specifically for FastTrack certification.

Director Forde noted that they have been pushing and their historical backlog is gone. She said his team has done herculean work and have been very thoughtful in addressing the needs of their vendors. Director Forde pointed out that this was their goal for 2020 and they did not let COVID stop them, but they had to be really creative because they sent the team home on March 16th. She expressed wanting to give credit where credit is due because there was a lot of work being done behind the scenes and wanted to acknowledge that.

Director Forde stated that one of the reasons it was important was because they wanted to increase their vendor pool. She pointed out that actually because of COVID they need to register more. Director Forde said she hoped that for those that are familiar with BEP and CMS that they can appreciate what a huge step forward this is. She added that she needed to say to the Council that the Lt. Governor did ask her explicitly about vendors and contracting and she should have. Director Forde stated that one of the questions that she asked is what they are doing which they will get into a little bit more with some of the Q & A, but the Certification piece was huge. She asserted that she wanted them all to know that they are being held accountable at the highest level of this administration. Director Forde gave a shout out to the Certification team for the work they have done.

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Director Forde indicated that the team would answer Mr. Montgomery's question about the 2020-2021 BEP Goals Report for the State of Illinois and their budget. Harry Reinhart responded that they produce an annual report that covers every agency and university that is seen under the BEP Act and they generate all their diversity spend on the report available online or they can send it to him. He suggested giving them a call if he is referencing different reports and they can discuss those.

Director Forde replied that they just sent the report through the chat function which will be circulated through the Council. She stated that for reference it is the 2019 Business Enterprise Annual Report, which looks at the July 2018 to July 2019 fiscal period, and is located on their website.

Member Ivory acknowledged the work that they have done in terms of making things better overall. He said he always wants to acknowledge when people are doing the right things, but in spite of doing all the right things they still have challenges before them, and they can always better their best. Member Ivory clarified that there are a couple of areas he wanted to touch on. He described that from a chamber perspective and talking to Bloomberg and all kinds of tv shows about the issues impacting the African American community, one of the points is that when they take a look at the data, no one is being more adversely impacted than the African American businesses.

Member Ivory outlined that when they take a look at black business compared to brown business, there is a far greater impact on black businesses than brown business being affected by far. He stated that in trying to get more things on the sheltered market, no one is going to challenge them if they add something to the disparity study on where they can do more sheltered markets because it's clear across the board that they are not participating at a very high level.

Member Ivory commented that Dr. King said it best "...of the good things we have a small portion, of the bad things we got a double portion." He said he is listening to businesses all across the country who didn't get PPE money and it is estimated they may lose 30% of black businesses to this pandemic because they won't survive. Member Ivory stated that he thinks it will take bold action and stepping up to the plate and put money and resources where they belong based upon the devastation that a particular group is experiencing across the board. He told Director Forde that he is encouraged that they become more intentional and as a process they can draw things out and they want to get things done but in an emergency Congress acted quickly because they understood the devastation. Member Ivory noted that when Blacks are being devastated they need to act quickly in terms of resolutions and procurement opportunity and making sure those businesses survive. He affirmed

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adding more to sheltered markets as a resolution, one or two sheltered markets didn't correct the disparity, they should continue to do more things and add more to the list

Member Ivory asserted that in the same way when Blacks are being devastated they need to act quickly in terms of resolutions, procurement opportunities and making sure those businesses survive. He said he doesn't think anyone will challenge them for adding more to the disparity study so they can do sheltered markets. Member Ivory stated he thinks they are a solution.

Director Forde responded that that despite the audio issues she heard him loud and clear. She pointed out that last week she heard the number was 41%. Director Forde said she understands what he is saying about decisive, timely response and action. She said they are not dragging their feet, but they do want to do it right and well. Director Forde said they are looking at how they can be creative. She stated CMS is still doing facility management, procurement and a lot of other things related to COVID and they are still focused on BEP and making opportunities. Director Forde affirmed that she has demonstrated her commitment to this space and these businesses that need them now more than ever and hears him loud and clear. She stated she hopes they have seen that they've partnered more with DCEO, and that they don't have funds, they may have procurement as a process, but they don't have money. Director Forde pointed out that's why they've started things like the Monday message and are doing more with DCEO so they can get vendors coming and going and connect the dots as fast as possible because these are the exact vendors trying to keep their businesses afloat while fighting two pandemics at one time and point to how they can remove some of that bureaucracy from them. She stated she is committed to working with Member Ivory and other Council members, but to know that CMS and this administration gets it, they are working on it, and they hear him loud and clear. Director Forde recognized Member Bautista.

Member Bautista stated asking to be recognized to support, confirm and second Member Ivory's comments. He said he believes the African American community has been particularly hard hit during this COVID period and is consistently hard hit, even outside of COVID. Member Bautista declared his interest in what if anything can be done to ensure there are mechanisms and efforts in place to outreach to this particular group. He cited that in Latinx communities, vendors tend to have high rates of availability but don't always get high rates of utilization, while African American communities tend to have high rates of unavailability because of significant barriers, compounded by high rates of underutilization. Member Bautista stated he is looking forward to seeing what they can do to help this tremendously adversely impacted community. Director Forde thanked Member Bautista.

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Director Forde recognized Mr. Herb Stokes. Mr. Stokes stated his question goes back to their request for member representation on the BEP Council prior to the pandemic which he made formally with Mr. Michael Merchant. He said it is an outstanding issue for them and himself as chair of the Advocacy Committee for the CMSDC it is important that they are represented. Mr. Stokes referred back to the process in which he submitted a person to do that. Director Forde thanked him and explained they will be looking at the Council, knowing that some want to cycle on and will perhaps be supporting the Council in other ways. She stated she was not aware of a specific name offered but will get with Mr. Merchant about it and thanked Mr. Stokes for raising the matter.

Director Forde acknowledged Member Roberts. Member Roberts respectfully professed her support of Member Bautista's and Member Ivory's comments. She proposed that whatever they could do to help she would like to discuss at a future Compliance Subcommittee meeting. Director Forde thanked Member Roberts.

VIII. Public/Vendor's Testimony

- Bruce Montgomery; Founder & President, *Montgomery & Co*; Founder, Executive, Producer and Host, *Technology Access Television*

Mr. Montgomery thanked Director Forde and enthused that their outreach efforts at this time have been pretty phenomenal. He remarked this is a high router mark for the State of Illinois and for CMS. Mr. Montgomery pointed out that these processes have often been secluded and not well seen by the outside vendor community. He noted that a lot of times the meetings are held downtown during the day, have been inconvenient and joining remotely has not been an option. He specified that efforts to have chats and webinars have greatly extended and her participation as a Director is to be commended. Mr. Montgomery stated that often times they don't get a chance to see agency directors involved directly in this meaningful work of engaging diverse suppliers in doing business.

Mr. Montgomery cited that now the State of Illinois has a \$40 billion budget and they are really in unprecedented times in that for many many years under the previous leadership there was no budget. He outlined that for 3 years the State of Illinois did not have a working budget, it was only in the last year of that administration but now they are going into 3 consecutive years of \$40 billion expenditures. Mr. Montgomery pronounced that this is exactly the time where real leadership is necessary and as was mentioned by the 3 previous speakers, we must act now with some level of expediency.

Mr. Montgomery said the question he has, has to do with something in the 2019 Annual Report, he would assume has to do with the operating year 2019-2020 on the webpage

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and BEP performance goals. He stated they are about to start a new budget year in about 10 days. Mr. Montgomery emphasized that this is the time that they need to institute a new monitoring policy that says we're not going to wait until the end of the year to determine agency performance against goals, we're going to either have monthly or quarterly reporting so if some agencies are having a challenge that's where the technical assistance comes in. He said they need some support from some of our working and operating professionals to show those.

Mr. Montgomery stated he happened to be on a call with Irma Lopez and one of the procurement professionals said his department is so small they don't have an outreach budget and they don't really know how to get the word out. He pointed out that's exactly the benefit of them participating on those webinars so then what had never happened for that agency all of the sudden happened. He said they had a chance to air their policies, what's coming up, some of the things that they do particularly and so again he encouraged Director Forde to continue to do what she is doing. Mr. Montgomery remarked like she said when COVID is over, he would still love to see these webinars and engagement activities continue and would also like to see some kind of dashboard that gives performance against goals, reporting progress, and success stories can also be highlighted so that minority businesses and African American businesses have the chance to line up with where they are strong inside that \$40 million budget. Mr. Montgomery thanked Director Forde for taking his question and stated he looks forward to supporting her work moving forward.

Director Forde thanked Mr. Montgomery. She commented that they have a very small team of folks and one of the things that they do is help them with their data literacy, management and practices. She said they are the data team, they support project management and work very closely with BEP so that they can have better insight into exactly what he is talking about. Director Forde stated that waiting until the end of the year is a foregone conclusion. She outlined that they are now looking at the data that in the past was not available to them and just to be transparent, they were maybe not as data literate as staff people to be able to translate x to y. Director Forde added that if they were, it was maybe not in a timely and a consistent fashion, so they are looking at that.

Director Forde indicated that the other piece that she wanted to flag for him is that COVID isn't going away anytime soon. She explained that their impression is that they are going to be in some state of COVID response, speaking as Janel Forde, not as IDPH or the Governor, for at least another year. She specified that when they are thinking about the webinars the practices, the outreach opportunities that they are putting in place, they certainly will evolve over time based on need, but they don't anticipate this is going away in two weeks or two months. Director Forde emphasized she wanted to be crystal clear about that, vendors need them and until they have one person showing up and it's

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clear that nobody cares, and nobody needs to hear them say the same thing over and over again they will be there. She expressed her appreciation that Mr. Montgomery gave them feedback and for hearing that what they are doing is relevant and supporting the population they seek to serve but she wants to make it clear to the Council and him specifically that they have no intention of pulling up stakes because they've been doing it for two months.

Director Forde asserted that the COVID response is going to be a long-felt matter and whether or not they are actively dealing with COVID-19 or they're dealing with the aftermath of COVID-19 it will still be felt in black and brown communities, in particular black communities, it will still be felt by black businesses and so their response in supporting those communities is to be present, is to be helpful, is to be relevant, so again she said she wanted to affirm for him her position on that and the teams understanding of what they will be doing.

Director Forde stated the last thing she wanted to flag for him was that the team is working on success stories because it is important to highlight what is happening. She added also where they are finding that vendors are finding opportunities, have been successful and what is different what happened now that made them more successful than maybe in the past in getting state business as well as a little bit of positive promotion and to be able to share good news for a change. Director Forde pointed out that a client reached out to them to share their recent success with some vendors and also on Friday to make known that they had 6 vendors they were already working with from other jurisdictions and not the state, but they weren't part of their BEP participation goals. Director Forde expressed her excitement to see a lot of pieces of their strategy coming together. She said she wants the Council to know that they hear and see the expediency in which they must act and that is not lost on them. Director Forde gave the floor to Mr. Merchant.

Mr. Merchant told Mr. Montgomery that he hit upon a really good topic. He said that is something that the Council has probably been hearing for a while and knows that not only the Council but many people in the public have been asking for this, so they have a good understanding of their contract monitoring system and have been hearing about it. Mr. Merchant explained that in order for them to be able to make the strategic moves they are talking about they do need to have that data, so they have put together a great data team and right now they have really good data when it comes to their primes, and he can maybe get a report to show that their prime spend this year specifically with African Americans is up from what it was at the same time last year, but that's something he can bring to the Compliance Subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Merchant reported that one of the things they are still struggling with is they have to be able to get the information for what the sub spend has been and they are very

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close to that now. He said that they have been working very closely with the Chief Purchasing Office (CPO) to be able to match their systems and they will have real time data. He added that they have been doing some beta testing and are starting to get the real time data for all of the subs that are in the system which he believes is going to give them a significant amount of information about where they are with their spend. Mr. Merchant reiterated that Mr. Montgomery brought up a really great point and he hopes that they are going to have some really great news about that very soon. Director Forde thanked Mr. Merchant.

IX. Adjournment

Director Forde notified the Council that for the record they will be following up with them on the various information discussed before the next Council meeting. She wished everyone well and to continue to be safe. Director Forde adjourned the meeting at 3:24 p.m.

➤ Next Subcommittee Meetings

- Certification Subcommittee Meeting – Monday, July 27, 2020
- Outreach Subcommittee Meeting – Tuesday, July 28, 2020
- Compliance Subcommittee Meeting – Wednesday, July 29, 2020

➤ Next Council Meeting. – Monday, August 24, 2020

BEP [Outreach Events](#)

Note: There will be no IPB Notices and Solicitations Reports for this meeting.

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