
Allegheny County MBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Facilities Management Conference Room, County Office Building
Tuesday, December 2, 2014
9:00 a.m.

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Austin Davis – Executive Assistant, Office of the Allegheny County Executive
Marc Little – CEO/President, Minority and Women Educational Labor Agency (MWELA)
M. Gayle Moss – Chair, MBE Advisory Committee
James Overton – President/Principal Advisor, Overton Financial Group
Barbara Parees – Deputy County Manager, Office of the Allegheny County Manager
Toni Silva – Supplier Relations Director, UPMC
Ola Jackson – Founder/CEO, Onyx Woman Network (OWN)
Tim Stevens – Chairman, Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Larry Brinker – President/CEO, Brinker Group
Victor Diaz – President, VideoTek Construction
Abass Kamara – Partner, Carey Group
Gregory Spencer – President/CEO, Randall Industries, LLC
Iftikhar Malik – President, Shawn Malik, Inc.
Roxanne Sewell – President, LJS Publishing/Talk Magazine

Also Present:

Ruth Byrd-Smith – Director, Allegheny County Department of M/W/DBE
Lisa Edmonds – Deputy Director, Allegheny County Department of M/W/DBE
Kyron Robinson – ProRank Business Solutions
Wade West – ProRank Business Solutions

Agenda:

- I. Open Meeting**
- II. Introductions**
- III. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**
- IV. Overview of M/W/DBE Consulting Services by ProRank Business Solutions**
- V. Old Business - Update on Chapter 435 Language Legislation**
- VI. Adjournment**

I. Open Meeting**II. Introductions**

Glenda Anderson, the caterer who provided food for this event, introduces herself to the attendees and presents her ministry, Wreaths for Water.

III. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

This was not addressed.

IV. Overview of M/W/DBE Consulting Services by ProRank Business Solutions

ProRank Business Solutions specializes in small business development as well as assisting agencies and organizations that are tasked with growing small businesses. Kyron Robinson has a background in DBE supportive services; in 2009, he became the director of PennDOT's DBE Supportive Service Center after having worked as a coordinator there since 2005. Wade West also worked at that Center. Both are very familiar with the PA UCP and getting DBEs on federally-funded projects. They believe they will be able to help the MBE Advisory Committee identify trends in the data and make decisions that will improve the M/W/DBE Department based on tactics and strategies they recently used while assisting Delaware's DOT. Mr. Robinson applauds the Department's recordkeeping. He observes that the Department is meeting the County's goals and believes that the objective is what can be done beyond that to help minority- and women-owned businesses while further promoting the services that the Department offers to new businesses. He also points out that every Civil Rights program is quarantined, so to speak, in government reports and ProRank would like to find out how the Department can be a more centralized component in the County contracting process. ProRank will be evaluating the program using methods such as conducting formal needs assessments as well as interviewing program stakeholders.

First, they will be collecting all basic research data. Mr. Robinson believes they may have done that already if the information is what is on the Department's website. The information they have is the Annual Reports and Quarterly Reports. The Quarterly Reports contain contract award data and, if all of that information is accurate, this will be the basic research data. ProRank will also need copies of any past evaluations conducted by any third party consultants or the DOT. They will also be providing survey questions for the Committee's review and approval that will then be circulated in order to collect data on how the Department is performing.

This process has been broken into three phases: The first phase is the aforementioned collection of data. Secondly, the data collected during Phase 1 will need to be organized. The interviews and evaluations will be conducted during this phase. The third and last phase will be a consolidation of all the data into a program report. During each phase if they find that any data is time-sensitive, they will provide the Committee with a written report at that time.

Most information will be exchanged via email. ProRank will be creating a web portal specifically for this project and anything that is too large to email can be uploaded there. They also employ subcontractors who can physically come on-site to collect data, if need be. The survey will be available on an automated phone line for those who are less savvy. Additionally, they have created an email address for this project which, if information is sent to it, will be uploaded to the portal immediately. The address is alleghenyco@prorankllc.com.

Mr. Robinson states that he and Mr. West would like to have the survey questions approved by the Advisory Committee by December 15, 2014. He anticipates a 90-day work schedule, with each phase taking around 30 days to complete. ProRank will ideally have all accomplishment reports and contract award numbers by December 19, 2014. At least 250 to 300 survey responses from PA UCP certified firms will be needed in order to have a good sample. There are two sets of questions, survey and interview. There will be about 20 people brought in for live interviews, ten of whom have already been identified; everyone else will be directed to one of the three given methods to take the survey. The survey consists of approximately 17 questions. A few sample questions are read: "Is your firm certified by any other organization or municipality as a minority- or woman-owned business?" "Is your firm currently certified by the M/W/DBE program as a woman- or minority-owned business?" "Do you have plans to become certified by Allegheny County's M/W/DBE program as a minority- or woman-owned business, if you are not already? If no, briefly state why." "What is the size of your business and your annual sales?" James Overton asks what the most compelling question of this survey is supposed to be, as they feel that the questions read are very basic. Mr. Robinson answers that that depends on the person taking the survey because not every company has the same issues. Furthermore, the area where the Department needs help is outreach; many small minority- and women-owned businesses are unaware of the services available to them through the Department. Committee members are welcome to create their own questions to address different needs. The interview questions are the PA UCP's 9 objectives turned into 9 questions, with follow-up questions as needed.

The web address for the web portal is alleghenyco.prorankllc.com. It is password protected with usernames, and different levels of security are available. Any revisions to the survey questions should be directed to Ruth Byrd-Smith. The questions are currently in .PDF format, but Microsoft Word versions will be circulated to the Committee members.

The survey results will be anonymous. Marc Little believes that 17 survey questions are too much. Mr. West counters that they do not want to dilute the results, however, the Committee is welcome to make changes as they see fit.

V. Old Business - Update on Chapter 435 Language Legislation

Councilwoman Amanda Green-Hawkins requested information about the revisions to which M. Gayle Moss responded and has not heard anything since. Austin Davis had been tasked with following up on the progress. He discovered that the revisions are sitting in the Economic Development Council, which is chaired by Ms. Green-Hawkins. Because it is a non-controversial issue it should be easy to approve. A meeting was held recently and this legislation was not on the agenda so Mr. Davis will follow up again.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.