2023 IQ-S Subcommittee: Increasing Diverse Contractors (plus Extensions)

# Subcommittee Overview and Objectives

This subcommittee is tasked with increasing the number of diverse contractors that are currently involved in the green energy (efficiency) field. Increasing diversity of representation is needed to further engage customers who historically have not participated in the available programs, as well as to help expand or launch new energy efficiency businesses. This will help this subcommittee align with the goals of the Equity Subcommittee Market Development Initiative. The following reasons are just some of the reasons why diverse contractors are often overlooked in this field:

* Lack of access to capital. Minority-owned businesses are often less likely to have access to capital than non-minority-owned businesses. This can make it difficult for them to obtain loans, which can hinder their ability to grow and expand.
* Lack of experience. A misperception may be that minority-owned businesses may have less experience in the construction industry than non-minority-owned businesses. This can make it difficult for them to compete for government contracts, which often require a certain level of experience.
* Lack of knowledge about the government contracting process. The government contracting process can be complex and difficult to navigate. Minority-owned businesses may not be familiar with the process, which can make it difficult for them to compete for government contracts.
* Discrimination/Lack of Connections. Minority-owned businesses may face discrimination from general contractors and other businesses. This can make it difficult for them to get contracts and to compete on an equal footing.
* Misperceptions. There are some misperceptions about minority-owned businesses, such that they are not as capable or reliable as non-minority-owned businesses. These misperceptions can make it difficult for minority-owned businesses to get contracts and/or to extend their businesses to serve new markets.

This subcommittee’s aim is to help locate, create ease of access, and ultimately increase the number of diverse contractors by easing the barriers to entry for the contractors.

**Objective**

Identify and recruit ten (10) additional diverse contractors who are interested in supporting Ameren Illinois’ energy efficiency portfolio by the end of 2024.

**Committee Extensions**

In addition, the subcommittee will consider extending committee objectives to support increased participation by diverse implementers and to develop a program to mentor emerging professionals, with a focus on (but not limited to) increasing the number of diverse professionals who are interested in developing a career in energy efficiency.

# Background Research

Section XI, below, contains an extensive list of resources on identifying, recruiting, and supporting diverse trades people and professionals. The Facilitation Team is currently summarizing key “lessons learned.”

* **Promotes Economic Growth:** A more diverse contractor pool means that resources and opportunities are distributed more widely, leading to increased economic growth. Minority-owned businesses contribute to job creation, innovation, and economic development.
* **Enhances Innovation:** Diverse perspectives often lead to more creative solutions and innovative approaches. When you have a diverse set of contractors, you're more likely to see a wider range of ideas and problem-solving strategies.
* **Improves Competition:** A more diverse group of contractors fosters healthy competition, which can lead to better-quality products and services and more competitive pricing. This benefits consumers and the industry as a whole.
* **Reduces Discrimination:** Increasing diversity can help reduce discrimination and promote fair treatment within the business ecosystem. It sends a message that opportunities are available to all, regardless of their background.
* **Better Reflects the Customer Base:** If your contractors are diverse, they are more likely to understand and cater to a diverse customer base. This can lead to better customer satisfaction and loyalty.
* **Strengthens Community Ties:** Supporting minority-owned businesses can strengthen ties between companies and the communities they operate in, leading to a positive impact on corporate social responsibility and reputation.
* **Compliance with Regulations:** In many regions, there are regulations and policies that encourage or mandate diversity in contracting, and by increasing diverse contractor participation, businesses can ensure they comply with these regulations and avoid potential legal issues.
* **Expands Market Access:** Having diverse contractors opens new markets and business opportunities. Minority-owned businesses may have connections and access to markets that majority-owned businesses do not.
* **Boosts Employee Morale**: A commitment to diversity and inclusion can boost employee morale and engagement. Employees are often more satisfied when they see their organization taking steps to promote fairness and equity.
* **Long-Term Viability**: Embracing diversity is seen as a key factor in a company's long-term success. As societies become more diverse, businesses that can adapt and thrive in diverse environments are more likely to endure.

# Subcommittee Deliverables/Outcomes

For 2023, the key deliverables will be:

* **Literature Review**: Summarizing available research/lessons on developing and supporting diverse contractors, implementers, and professionals
* **Two-page summary of key learnings** – challenges/opportunities
* **Business Case**: Developing the Business Case for increasing diverse contractors, implementers, and professionals in the Clean Energy ecosystem.
* **Identifying and Geomapping Existing Diverse Contractors/Implementers**: Developing a comprehensive list of available diverse contractors and implementers; geomapping the contractors/implementers to identify gaps in service areas
* **Develop a Curriculum** for mentoring emerging professionals[[1]](#footnote-2)
* **Developing Plan for Identifying at Least Ten (10) Diverse Contractors** who are interested in participating in Ameren IL’s Portfolio[[2]](#footnote-3)
* **Identify and Coordinate with other Diverse Contractor Development Efforts in Ameren IL Service Territory**: For example, under CEJA, various organizations have applied for funding to become contractor training hubs.

# Deliverable Extensions

1. Create a geomap of all diverse trade allies from Ameren Illinois for public use.
   1. Final product will include color coding by type of service provided (HVAC/Furnace etc.) and will include solar contractors
   2. Will include small and diverse trade allies throughout the state
   3. Will be used in measuring success of the subcommittee by tracking growth in contractors and geographic diversity
2. Create a database of local, diverse and/or small businesses/implementation contractors and post it on the LIEEAC IQ-S Website for public use.
   1. Final product will list implementation contractors who exist in the state in a searchable database
   2. Will be able to search by service provided and location (EX: Diverse graphic designer in Ameren IL Service Territory)
3. Create a new pilot program designed to identify emerging, diverse professionals and train them for work within the energy industry.
   1. Form a year-long curriculum to support emerging clean energy professionals
   2. Will consist of monthly meetings giving an overview of the energy field with an eventual endpoint
   3. Will help emerging professionals build relationships in the energy field and build soft skills and professional development
   4. Will help introduce emerging professionals to key players in the energy efficiency industry

# Subcommittee Members

Erika Dominick – Walker-Miller Energy Services

Amber Anderson – Walker-Miller Energy Services

Denise Moore – Black Business Alliance Peoria Chapter

# Subcommittee Co-Chair(s)

Jamey Neal – Ameren IL

Diana Fuller – Walker-Miller Energy Services

Odette Watson – East Central Illinois Community Action Agency

# Facilitation Team

1. Deondre Rutues – Facilitation, Research, Outreach
2. Annette Beitel – Sr. Facilitator
3. Nelson May – Project Support, Research and Communications

# Potential Obstacles

The number of available diverse contractors that fits the profile needed for the field

* Lack of awareness. Some people may not be aware that there are diverse contractors available. This can be due to a lack of marketing or outreach by minority-owned businesses, or to a lack of knowledge about diverse contracting opportunities.

# Schedule

1. Meeting #1: Wednesday, November 1st, 3:00 – 5:00pm
2. Meeting #2: Monday, November 27th, 3:00 – 5:00pm
3. Meeting #3: Wednesday, December 20th, 1:00 – 3:00pm
4. Report-out in December 2023

# List of Key Questions/Issues to Research & Discuss

1. What certifications does a diverse contactor need to be eligible for inclusion in the field?
2. What are the available opportunities that exist for diverse contractors? We want to ensure proper “fit”.
3. How do we create a pipeline of diverse contractors?
4. If under skilled, understaffed, underfunded, how do we develop diverse contractors so they can be eligible for inclusion in the field?
5. Diverse contractors may be trained through community resources but may lack certifications. How do we provide support to contractors to get certified?
6. What specific tradespeople does this opportunity target? (i.e., HVAC, weatherization, electricians, plumbers, etc.)

# Resources

* [Alberto Workforce Diversity Memo.pdf](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/ETuKiwat21FKuBvKgdOtxYcBo7wp6Ms7A4lk-QBzS6h9fA?e=oQKUHP)
* [Ameren Diverse Program Ally.pdf](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/Ee6qENWJt1dNuYWxSnRGUvoBOkfVHsf_S3QN2tJYTXOZDA?e=fRmvBe)
* [E2 Diversity in Clean Energy Report.pdf](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/ETJRSc0_60xFqWwzXLD-PJkBQXmuBDqWecVn8nyy69nlLA?e=Swqu5q)
* [E2 Economic Benefits of Racial Inclusion and Equitable Environmental Policies.pdf](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/EW5HUMQXFjxAss2L7gzDZUkBu90xbBuyyAnqMHu4wqDYGQ?e=GJbgBb)
* [Future 500 Presentation – Corporate D&I External Leadership – April 2021 (2).pdf](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/EUGw66690_tBmXhi7nIxLlEBexf0L6r4s7tfgBsPMdxaCA?e=8cHbiw)
* [Kelly Shelton Memo - Workforce Supplier Diversity Best Practices.pdf](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/ERLIO5g1V75PhU1k6CVoD7MBVE8M6wxRQFYM5XmHUkJ89w?e=MB0EJa)
* [Release for E2 ASE BOSS AABE EEFA Diversity Report 09082021-final.pdf](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/ERTfIY4K1nZFgbjJ8bhqedQByG3ePLoUIXBdBw7W1rrupQ?e=SZ1a9w)
* [SEEDAC Resilient Workforce Report.pdf](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/EYr_10mJmF5Lia8XjXabkhIBhea3gKBEC5xnndCim1AEOw?e=nnQe4n)
* [Supplier Diversity Policy Session.docx](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/EfNSdHU26GRFgIExbPueX7IBIm_TghZM_psTshB86JUsGA?e=KbOI3P)
* [Walker-Miller Report Empowered - Diverse Business Development.pdf](https://iqsouthadvisorycommittee.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IQ-SFacilitationTeam/EVcKxJUQxetAmhZeeC7XAokBtflO3wY9WIoK-ZOXoLGfNQ?e=w36Rfb)

# Subcommittee Member Affirmation of Work Plan

*[List of Subcommittee members affirmed; date(s) of affirmation.]*

1. Workplan as part of the subcommittee that focusses on a plan for next year (2024) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The goal for 2024 is to identify and develop a plan for monitoring business growth and success [↑](#footnote-ref-3)