**Minority Business Initiative Advisory Board**

***Meeting Minutes***

**Thursday, September 21, 2023**

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Remotely Held by Teams Meeting Software

Hartford CT, Connecticut

**Attendance**

* Board Members Present: Chairman Howard K. Hill, Avery Gaddis, George Mathanool, Deputy Commissioner Paul O. Robertson, Pedro Soto, Roberta Hoskie, Senator Doug McCrory
* Quorum: Yes
* DECD Staff Present: Maribel La Luz, Alvetta Spencer, Kerron Vernon, George Norfleet

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Chairman Howard K. Hill called the meeting to order at 1:07 PM.

**Minutes:**

Chairman Hill, per Maribel’s request, asked for the August minutes to be approved during the next meeting.

**DAS UPDATE**

Meg Yetishevsky and Shelli Orosz from the Procurement Office presented on new legislative changes taking effect October 1st 2023 impacting how small and minority businesses contract with the state.

* Raising the threshold for requiring contractor prequalification from $500,000 to $1 million, thereby removing some bonding requirements for contracts under $1 million that have historically been a barrier for some small businesses.
* Updating reporting requirements on agency expenditures for contracts with small, minority, and women-owned businesses. This measure will help agencies identify their set-aside goals earlier by aligning them with the fiscal year cycle and allowing for automation of the reporting process.
* Increasing the threshold for minor purchases from $10,000 to $25,000 and the posting requirement for competitively bid purchases from $50,000 to $100,000 which opens new opportunities for small, women-owned, and minority-owned suppliers not currently under state contracts.

DAS is reaching out to AdvanceCT, APEX, CBIA, HEDCO, SAMA, BBA, WBDC, Southern Black Chamber of Commer, CEDF, Girls for Technology and other business and community organizations to educate them on the legislative changes. DAS requested names of any additional organizations for outreach to help get the word out. Shelli Orosz requested names of specific contacts to increase the likelihood of getting a response.

Senator McCrory, who helped drive the legislation to passage, stated that while lowering the threshold for pre-qualification was a positive step forward, it is still very difficult for minority businesses to contract with the state. Many go through the complicated process of getting on an approved vendor list but still do not get selected.

**Action Items:**

State Contracting Data

* Senator McCrory requested vendor contracting data from the 10 largest agencies broken down by demographics to determine how many minority suppliers are being contracted for goods and services by the state.

**Directors Report Update (Maribel La Luz):**

Maribel provided an update on the upcoming MBI Summit. Instead of one large conference, there will be two smaller targeted events with the goal of having a matchmaking component in each. The first is tentatively scheduled for spring of 2024 in Hartford.

The MBI strategic plan will be presented during the next meeting on October 19. Commissioner Daum will likely be present. The plan takes into consideration previous feedback provided by the Board.

Maribel met with businesses in the City of New London and stopped by the new incubator space being run by Tony Sheridan. There are common themes that emerge from these visits one being the need and request for “mentorship” where businesses can be paired up to learn from each other.

Avery Gaddis requested an update on financials. Maribel replied that there was $88,000 remaining for MBI, separate from MBLRF which received an $11M allocation for FY2024. Avery also requested the new priorities for MBI. Maribel agreed and stated this will be the topic of discussion during the next meeting when presenting the strategic plan.

Chairman Hill stated he had lunch with Maribel earlier in the week where they had a similar discussion. Chairman Hill asked about continued funding sources to operate and implement the strategic plan and where the resources will come from to create more opportunities for minority businesses in the future.

**Meetings and Discussions:**

Maribel will meet with minority businesses and other stakeholders in the City of Waterbury on Oct 10.

**Other Business: None**

**Adjourn**

Howard Hill asked for a motion to adjourn. Avery Gaddis made the motion to end the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 1:48pm.