

MEETING: NEO Roundtable
DATE: March 15, 2023
LOCATION: Oswald Conference Center, Cleveland

1. MEETING PURPOSE: Goal

The meeting was titled “Diversity: Perspective & Partnership” and its purpose was to report on a survey conducted by the Program committee regarding DEI practices among Cogence Partner companies; learn from panelists about the challenges of diversity requirements and partnerships; hear from the perspective of diversity firm leaders; and as a group discuss opportunities for improvement.

2. DISCUSSION

3. IMPLEMENTATION: Next Steps

Offer mentor programs over extended time periods, not just by project

Ask Cogence Partners to make public commitment and hold each other accountable

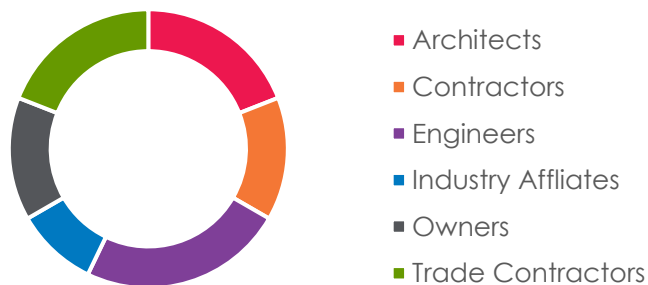
Be intentional. Make introductions and give recommendations. Own the responsibility

Simplify the certification process

Speak up when people say DEI doesn’t matter

Embody kindness – genuinely care for others

Attendance



2. DISCUSSION:

Current State	Desired Future State	Root Cause	Proposed Countermeasures
<p>Cogence Partners were asked to complete a survey prior to the meeting.</p> <p>One of the Questions: When bidding a project do you include diverse companies even when you do not have a percentage to meet (16 responses)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (45.5%) • Sometimes (36.4%) • No (9.1%) • N/A (9.0%) <p>Less than half answered “yes”.</p> <p>Panelists were asked “what are the barriers to starting a diverse company?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement of one full year before you can apply for certification hinders early growth • Lack of capital. Often have to work 2nd job to make ends meet while starting business • Usually true start-ups, not often legacy or generational businesses • Sometimes hired only to fill diversity requirements <p>Value of Certifications?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some companies will not work with you without certification. Some MBEs need it to survive • Paperwork is cumbersome and needs recertified annually. Costs time and money <p>Experiences on job sites?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with blue collar workers can be difficult as they are sometimes more brutally open with racist comments and actions • White collar workers usually not as blatant in their actions, instead they simply don’t hire your company 	<p>Companies viewed and hired based on competency, not race, ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, or any other identifier</p> <p>Equal the playing field</p> <p>MBE/DBE/WBE businesses not required to obtain multiple certifications that need renewed every year</p>	<p>Historically white, male dominated industry</p> <p>Racism, unconscious bias</p> <p>Lack of education, understanding of the challenges faced by MBE/DBE/WBEs</p> <p>Number of MBE/DBE/WBEs in the marketplace can make it difficult to fulfill requirements</p> <p>Usually are not legacy businesses, so there aren’t as many existing relationships</p>	<p>Benchmark and track the statistics; try to change them and measure success</p> <p>Help provide access to capital, funding, investments</p>