

Increasing Supplier DIVERSITY

When organizations learn and implement best practices for diverse suppliers, it helps to tip the scales towards positive outcomes for marginalized communities.



The WNC Diversity Engagement Coalition recently launched an initiative to support its members in developing more inclusive ways of doing business, sharing experiences and information across institutions.

One of the first steps towards increasing the use of diverse suppliers is explicit leadership support. Leaders then ensure that relevant employees, such as purchasing staff, understand that managing diversity and inclusion is one of their responsibilities.

Deborah Miles, Executive Director of the Center for Diversity Education at UNC Asheville and a member of the

WNC Diversity Engagement Coalition says, "If you ask someone why they choose a white vendor over a black vendor, it is usually has to do with the ease of having worked with that vendor before." In addition, adding new vendors to an organization's system requires extra paperwork that employees may avoid. These small actions can lead to systems that are unfavorable for smaller non-majority vendors.

Moreover, according to Miles, "70% of all jobs are found through a personal connection. Because we naturally divide ourselves into our comfortable "in-groups," it's easy to maintain a homogenous workplace without it being anybody's 'fault.' For us to undo that, we have to actively broaden our social networks, and our supplier networks."

This tendency to make decisions based on convenience and social segregation keeps the status quo in place. Implementing accountability



Green Opportunities trains, supports, and connects people from marginalized communities to sustainable employment pathways.



When you have a more diverse team, you have a better product.

measures and goals related to diversity are a necessary antidote to these barriers.

Brasfield & Gorrie, the contractor managing the construction of Mission Health's new surgical center, have diversity goals related to subcontractors. To help meet their goals, Brasfield & Gorrie have developed a partnership with Green Opportunities, offering trainings through the GO Build program and recruiting GO Build graduates.

At UNC Asheville, Miles and Joe Knisley, Senior Buyer, have been making an effort to educate staff across campus that their vendor directories show which suppliers are minority-owned businesses, and to encourage them to consider those vendors. "We want to encourage smart shopping," says Knisley, "to put people in touch with resources such as the state registry of Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB)."

Why should companies make the extra effort to diversify their vendors, in addition to it being the right thing to do? "All the research says when you have a more diverse team, you have a better product," Miles explains. "You have better relations with your customers, you are able to deliver more of what they want and you make more money." In addition, it broadens the economic base in our community allowing all of us a chance to thrive.

Best Practices in Supplier Diversity

1. Establish corporate policy and top corporate management support
2. Develop a corporate supplier diversity development plan
3. Establish comprehensive internal and external communication
4. Develop and identify opportunities for supplier diversity in strategic sourcing
5. Establish a supplier diversity development process
6. Establish tracing, reporting, and goal-setting processes
7. Establish a continuous improvement plan

Source: NMSDC-RG Moore-NSC Coalition

"We want to encourage smart shopping—to put people in touch with resources such as the state registry of Historically Underutilized Businesses."

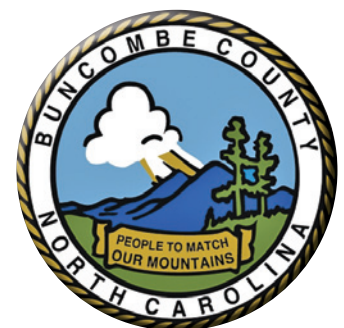
~ Joe Knisley

Western North Carolina Diversity Engagement Coalition

The WNC Diversity Engagement Coalition is a network of organizations dedicated to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion. WNC Diversity Engagement Coalition brings people together to collectively support the professional development, engagement, and inclusion of multicultural people within the member organizations in WNC and to serve as a resource for organizations around best policy and practice regarding equity in the workplace.

WNC Diversity Engagement Coalition member organizations are Mission Health, UNC Asheville, YMCA of Western NC, Buncombe County Schools, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, Biltmore, McGuire Wood & Bissette, Carolina Day School, A-B Tech, City of Asheville, Warren Wilson College, Buncombe County, MAHEC, Rainbow Mountain Community School, and the YWCA.

Find out more about the WNC Diversity Engagement Coalition at www.wncdec.com



www.buncombecounty.org