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May 2024 Newsletter

# Welcome to the CEI Monthly Newsletter!

We're thrilled to bring you the latest updates, insights, and stories from the heart of the Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion. We strive to highlight our collective journey toward creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive procurement landscape across our great state each month. Our mission is fueled by the dedication of our community, partners, and stakeholders, and we are excited to share our progress, celebrate our successes, and discuss the challenges we face together. As we continue to pave the way for transformative change, we invite you to stay informed, engaged, and inspired. Let's forge ahead, united in our commitment to equity and inclusion for all.

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### SUPPLIER DIVERSITY SCORECARD

As part of its responsibility to assess the State's progress toward meeting its supplier diversity goals, CEI has created a scoring evaluation for State agencies and public institutions for higher education. This supplier diversity scorecard, a significant step in our journey, was launched as a participatory research initiative to serve as a barometer for building a greater understanding of equity in opportunity within Illinois' business support ecosystem.

The research process included surveying stakeholders, including Illinois agencies and public institutions of higher education, as well as procurement-related councils and commissions. Each State agency and public institution of higher education received a tiered assessment based on the quality of their survey responses to questions related to the performance areas.

The commissioners' work on the scorecard was completed in April, though they continue to respond to occasional emails or questions about the scorecard. The commissioners have provided the requested purchasing entities with data and continue monitoring the inbox for questions related to the scorecard.



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## BEP COUNCIL UPDATES

The Business Enterprise Council for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities (BEP Council) was developed to help implement, monitor, and enforce the goals of the Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Act (BEP Act).

### Current BEP Council Members

Click the link [here](#) to see the list of the current BEP Council members and their term dates.

Angie Alonso-Cone  
Alan Brazil  
Jeanette Chavarria Torres  
Natalie Coleman  
Edith De La Cruz  
Bola Delano  
Raven DeVaughn  
Emilia DiMenco  
Terrence Duncan  
Rebecca Fyffe

Jacqueline Gomez  
Caronina Grimble  
Nina Harris  
Debra Jennings-Johnson  
Andrew Johnson  
Arielle Johnson  
Jesse Martinez  
Megan Nakano  
Brandy Phillips  
Khama Sharp



Since the start of 2024, three additional appointments to the BEP Council have been made. CEI welcomes Brandy Phillips, Arielle Johnson, and Dr. Natalie Coleman as its newest members.

#### Brandy Phillips

Brandy Phillips was named director of the Illinois Department of Transportation's Office of Business and Workforce Diversity in 2023. This unit oversees the implementation of strategies, policies, and directives for departmental business diversity efforts designed to support efficient operations and ultimately aimed toward achieving departmental goals and objectives.

Her diverse background includes 20 years of experience in the workforce and economic development sector, which also intensely focused on supplier diversity at the municipality level.

#### Arielle Johnson

Arielle Johnson has an expansive background as a business leader, consultant, and steward of public resources.

Arielle is the CEO of the Business Leadership Council (BLC) and has served in several public sector leadership roles, including Deputy Director of Civil Rights, Inclusion, and Opportunity for the City of Detroit and Deputy Director of the Business Enterprise Program when it was under the authority of the Illinois Department of Central Management Services.

#### Dr. Natalie Coleman

Dr. Natalie Coleman has over 15 years of experience as an educator and was honorably discharged in 2011 after serving as a combat veteran and Military Police Officer in the Illinois Army National Guard.

Dr. Coleman serves as a County Board member for District 10 in Will County and works full-time as the CEO of After the Peanut. Additionally, she is an adjunct education professor at Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois.

**HELLO**  
MY NAME IS

## Duties of BEP Council Members

Some of the BEP Council's responsibilities are to:

- Implement, monitor, and enforce the goals of the BEP Act.
- Approve (or deny) the Chairperson's BEP Council Secretary selection.
- Review, approve, or reject agency and PIHE compliance plans.
- Hold regular meetings to fulfill its responsibilities under the BEP Act.
- Set aside time during regular meetings to review and discuss evidence of past or present discrimination that affects State contracting with MBEs, WBEs, and PBEs.
- Approve any recommended rules and regulations for establishing and continuing narrowly tailored sheltered markets before the rules are submitted to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules.
- Report any applicable vendor that fails to submit a supplier diversity report to the Chief Procurement Officers.

## Delegated Responsibilities

The BEP Council delegated the following responsibilities to CEI's BEP Certification and Compliance Units:

- Develop and implement a certification procedure and system, including the FastTrack and Recognition certification processes.
- Review certification applications to ensure applicants are eligible.
- Maintain a list of certified BEP vendors available to the public.
- Review rules and regulations and make recommendations for the BEP Council.
- Review utilization plans, solicitation goal setting, pre-award, and individual contract waiver and exemption requests.
- Conduct outreach to current and prospective BEP vendors.

Until the BEP Council votes to return such delegated responsibilities to the BEP Council, BEP shall be independently responsible for performing the above duties and responsibilities.

## CEI OPERATIONAL UPDATES

### CEI Office Updates

In December 2023, CEI opened its new Chicagoland office. In February 2024, it opened its second office mere footsteps from the Capitol complex in Springfield. The opening of the Springfield location provides CEI with the physical presence necessary to conduct business, interact with external and internal stakeholders, and foster relationships within the greater Springfield metropolitan area. Bringing both these locations online marks an essential milestone in CEI's evolution.

### CEI Staff Updates

Please join us in welcoming CEI's newest staff members aboard!

#### Johnny Rodriguez – Outreach Manager

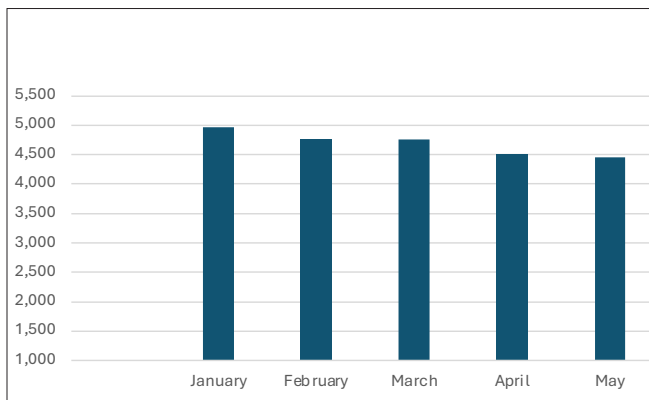
In the dynamic world of workforce development and community engagement, Johnny Rodriguez is a seasoned leader with a robust marketing and event-organizing background. A U.S. Army veteran with a degree in General Studies, including a concentration in Human Resources from Southern New Hampshire University, Johnny brings a wealth of experience to his role as Outreach Manager.

#### Nekeisha Battie – Mentor Protégé Program Manager

Nekeisha Battie is a committed leader with extensive experience in program management. A graduate of the University of Argosy and the University of Phoenix, Nekeisha has advanced degrees in Community Counseling and Psychology. Over the past 15 years, Nekeisha has worked with the Chicago Housing Authority and New Moms as a Program Director. Her experience in contract management, monitoring and evaluation, and working with contractors will serve as an asset while leading the Mentor Protégé Program.

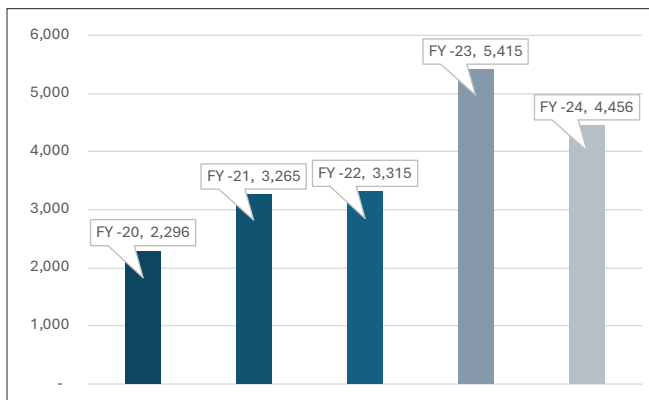
## BEP AND VBP CERTIFICATION CORNER

### BEP Certifications



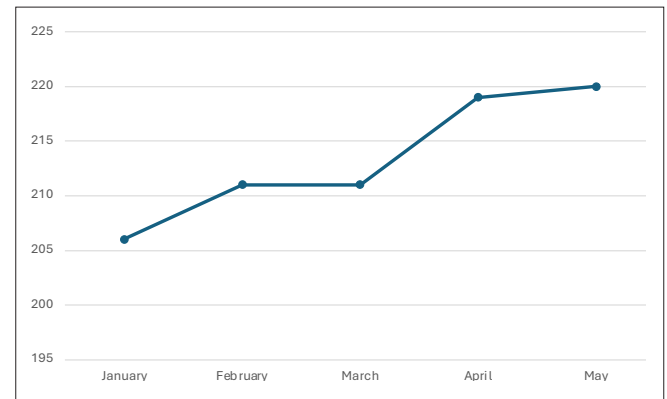
This graph denotes the total number of BEP certifications by month in 2024. As of May 6, 2024, the total number of BEP firms is 4,456.

The following graph shows the total number of BEP certifications in fiscal years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

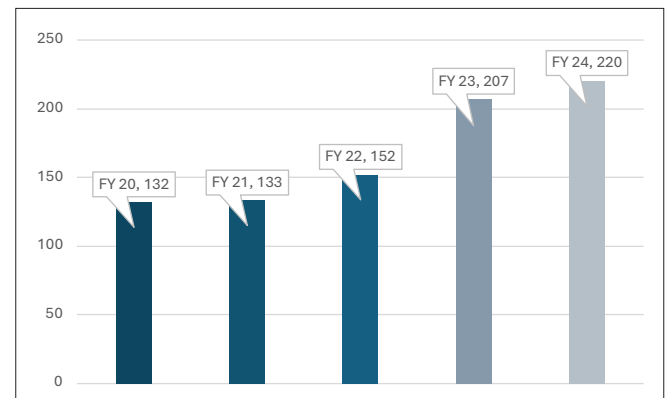


### VBP Certifications

As of May 6, 2024, CEI has 220 VBP-certified veteran firms.



The following graph shows the total number of VBP certifications in fiscal years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024.



## BEP AND VBP COMPLIANCE CHRONICLES

There is an essential distinction between CEI 14-day award waivers of a State contract, Business Enterprise Program (BEP) goal waivers (good faith effort waivers), and BEP goal exemptions.

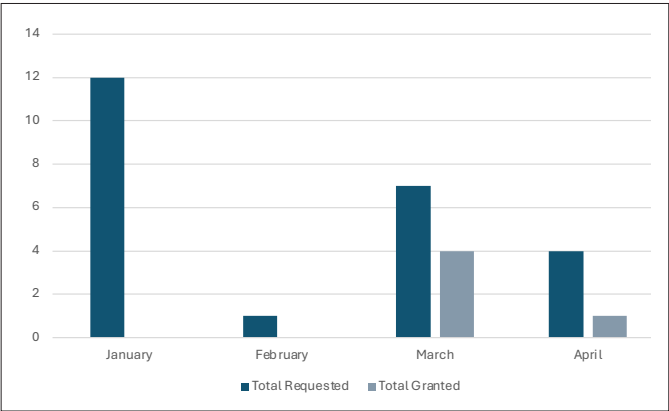
CEI and the Procurement Policy Board (PPB) can request written documentation from the contracting agency within 14 days after contract award or letting, and the agency must provide the requested documentation within seven days of receiving the request. A CEI 14-day award waiver pertains to granting permission for a contracting agency or public institution of higher education to enter into a contract before the 14-day period has ended. This waiver is granted by CEI and PPB, provided they approve the request in writing.

On the other hand, BEP goal good faith effort waivers and individual contract exemptions refer to a different aspect of the procurement process. The agencies and public Institutions of higher education subject to the BEP Act have aspirational goals for including minority-owned, women-owned, persons with disabilities-owned, and veteran-owned businesses in state contracts. In some instances, a BEP goal for an individual contract or an entire class of contracts may not be attainable or practical due to various reasons such as market availability or specific project requirements. The vendor can request a BEP or VBP goal waiver to waive the goal requirement in such situations. In contrast, the purchasing entity can request a BEP goal exemption to exempt a contract or class of contracts wholly or partially from a BEP goal.

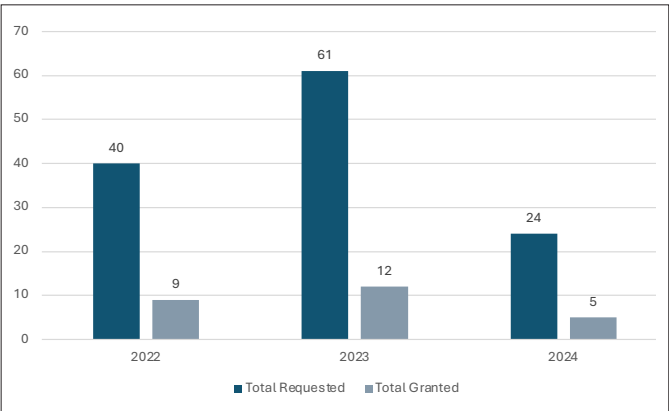
**Good Faith Effort Waivers**

The BEP Act stipulates that contractors can request a goal waiver before contract award when required to meet participation goals established under the BEP Act. BEP good faith effort (GFE) goal waivers are delegated to CEI’s BEP Compliance Unit in the BEP Council Bylaws.

The following graph illustrates the monthly number (in calendar year 2024) of vendor GFE waiver requests submitted to the BEP Compliance Unit and the number of those requests granted by BEP Compliance.

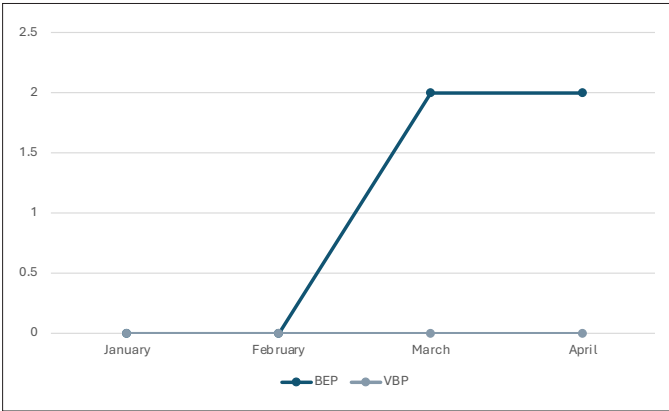


The graph below depicts the total number of GFE waiver requests and granted waivers from the last three calendar years.



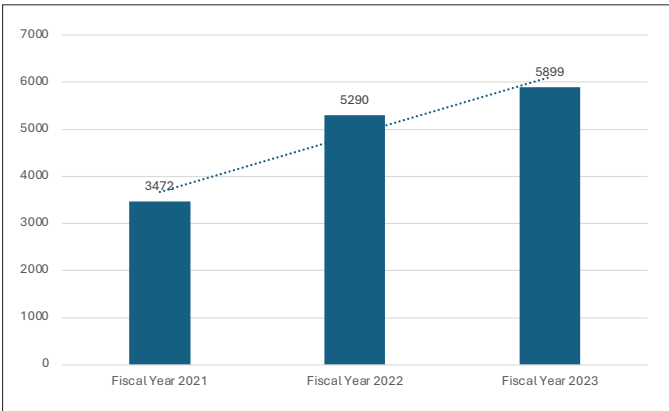
**Individual Contract Exemptions**

This graph indicates the number of department exemption requests for a goal reduction of the calculated goal, including 0%, that the Compliance Unit granted by month in the calendar year 2024.

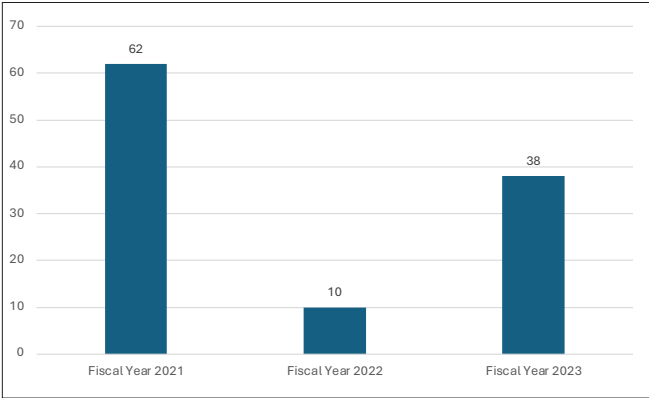


**Contract Metrics**

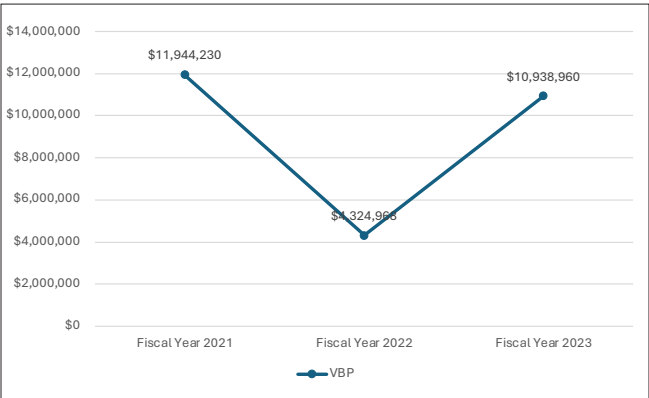
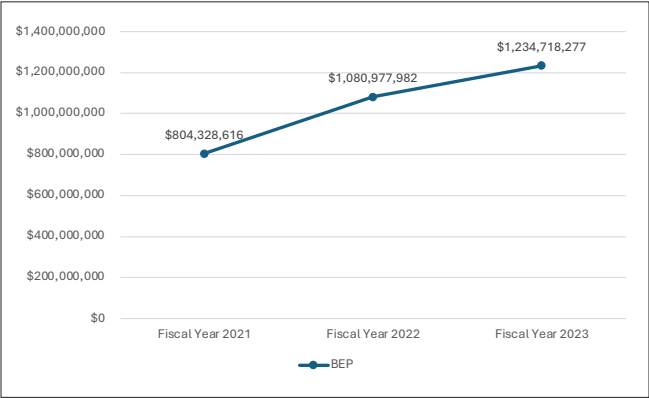
This graph displays the number of contracts with BEP supplier diversity goals in fiscal years 2021, 2022, and 2023.



This graph displays the number of contracts with BEP supplier diversity goals in fiscal years 2021, 2022, and 2023.



The following two graphs represent fiscal year expenditures to BEP-certified and VBP-certified vendors through the State procurement process. The dollars spent with BEP-certified and VBP-certified vendors are trending upward, primarily due to an increased vendor pool from enhanced certification opportunities.

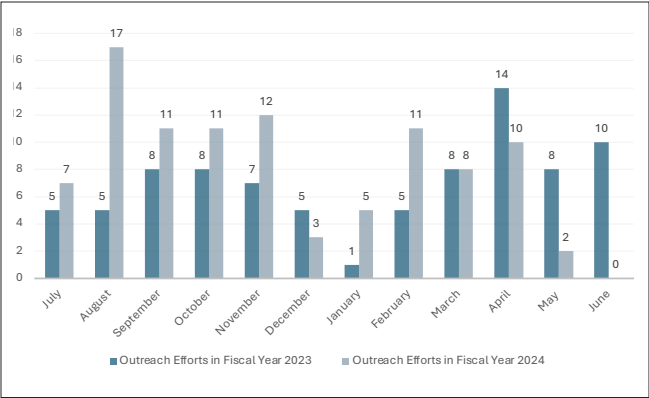


## OUTREACH OUTLOOK

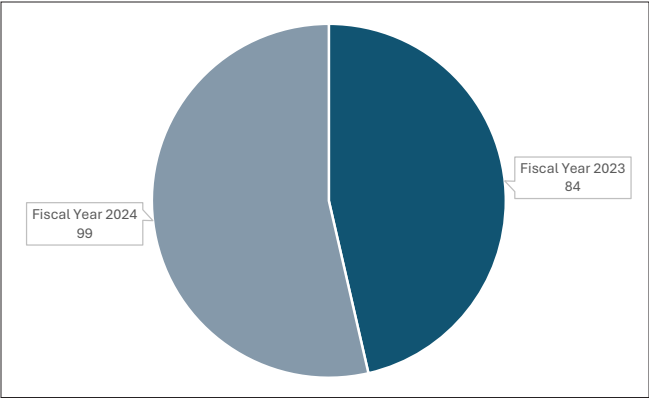
CEI’s Outreach Unit continues to enhance and support BEP and VBP by proactively engaging with diverse businesses and collaborating with stakeholders across Illinois. Outreach fosters awareness and participation in BEP and VBP through targeted outreach initiatives and promotion to the business community.



The graph below shows the number of BEP and VBP events attended by the Outreach Unit by month in FY23 and FY24.



The following pie graph compares FY23 to FY24 total outreach efforts completed by CEI staff.



Both graphs display a steady increase in outreach engagement with CEI’s vendor community. The data also shows that CEI has exceeded the goal of the FY23 outreach effort, with time remaining in FY24.

May Outreach Events that CEI Attended

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Kickoff & Business Expo	5/1/2024
IAHSE Latino Unity Day Springfield	5/8/2024
Beyond the Call: Veteran Business Support Symposium	5/9/2024
Inspira for Women by Women - Hispanic Business Network	5/10/2024
Chicago Latina Business Foundation Procurement Expo	5/16/2024
CEI Certification Educational Webinar	5/22/2024

Upcoming Outreach Events

Richton Park Community Resource Fair	6/5/2024
Chicago Small Business Expo 2024	6/13/2024
The African Descent-Citizens Reparations Commission Meeting	6/21/2024
BEP & VBP Certification Virtual Educational Webinar	6/26/2024
Southwestern Illinois College Procurement Event	7/16/2024
Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Conference Expo	10/3/2024
Women’s Business Development Center Conference	9/12/2024

CEI Public Meetings and Virtual Office Hours

BEP Council Certification Subcommittee Meeting	5/7/2024	BEP Council Outreach Subcommittee Meeting	5/31/2024
BEP Certification Virtual Office Hours	5/8/2024	BEP Certification Virtual Office Hours	6/5/2024
BEP Certification Virtual Office Hours	5/15/2024	BEP Certification Virtual Office Hours	6/12/2024
CEI Monthly Meeting	5/15/2024	CEI Monthly Meeting	6/20/2024
BEP Council Compliance Subcommittee Meeting	5/16/2024	BEP Council Meeting	6/24/2024
BEP Certification Virtual Office Hours	5/29/2024		