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**Fiscal Year 2025 Quarter 1**

# Welcome to the CEI Quarterly Newsletter!

We're thrilled to bring you the latest updates, insights, and stories from the heart of the Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI). 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. 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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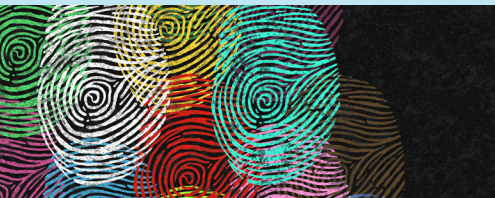
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## Commissioner Insights

The first quarter of fiscal year 2025 saw significant progress in ongoing legal defensibility research related to the 2022 Disparity Study and further outreach and communication efforts across CEI's core programs.

CEI has begun developing the parameters for a new disparity study by proactively researching programs, initiatives, and tools. The disparity study committee is focused on utilizing existing and upcoming litigation and legislation as guardrails to formulate standards for the new study. In August, the Commission presented the findings of the 2022 Disparity Study to the Business Enterprise Council for Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities (BEP Council). In addition, CEI completed a revised onboarding guide, focusing more on commissioner orientation and resources.

CEI, having completed work on the Scorecard in the previous quarter, began developing the Race and Gender Wage Report project plan. At the beginning of August, a survey was sent to all State agencies and public institutions of higher learning. By the end of the first month, a nearly 50% response rate was achieved. A working spreadsheet was developed for the disparity study committee to track legislation and court cases related to the ongoing legal defensibility of diversity programs to tackle disparity in state procurement.



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## CURRENT COMMISSIONERS

Chairperson	Nina M. Harris
Commissioner	Richard Costes
Commissioner	Bruce E. Montgomery
Commissioner	Ennedy D. Rivera
Commissioner	Benjamin Salentine
Commissioner	Ovelia Smith-Barton
Commissioner	Van P. Austin

One additional commissioner has been appointed since the start of fiscal year 2025. CEI welcomes Van Austin as its newest member.

### Van Austin

Van Austin, appointed by Governor J.B. Pritzker as a commissioner for CEI, is dedicated to supporting small and diverse businesses in Illinois by ensuring equitable access to state contracting opportunities. With over 19 years of experience in procurement and project management, Austin previously served as the Agency Procurement Officer for the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT), where he oversaw significant procurement operations and led a team of over 30 professionals managing more than one billion dollars in spending. His earlier roles include leading procurement efforts during the COVID-19 crisis at the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and contributing to various procurement-related commissions. Austin also has a background in the mining industry and holds a B.A. in Economics from the University of Illinois. He resides in Springfield, IL with his wife, enjoys outdoor activities, and is an active speaker on procurement topics.



## 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.

Alan Brazil  
Andrew Johnson  
Arielle Johnson  
Bola Delano  
Brandy Phillips  
Debra Jennings-Johnson  
Edith De La Cruz  
Emilia DiMenco

Jesse Martinez  
Khama Sharp  
Megan Nakano  
Natalie Coleman  
Nina Harris  
Caronina Grimble  
Raven DeV Vaughn  
Terrence Duncan



**Since the start of fiscal year 2025, one additional appointment to the BEP Council has been made. CEI welcomes Caronina Grimble as its newest member.**

The BEP Council creates an opportunity for civic-minded individuals interested in supporting underrepresented businesses to increase their capacity, grow revenue, and enhance their credentials. If you or someone you know is interested in joining the BEP Council, please visit the Office of Executive Appointments at <https://govappointments.illinois.gov/> for more information.

### Good Faith Effort Waiver Resolution

The BEP Council passed a resolution regarding good faith effort waiver reviews and determinations, effective July 1, 2024. This resolution rescinds the BEP Council's July 12, 2013 resolution. It grants the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) the responsibility of reviewing, approving, or denying vendor goal waiver requests for all agencies, boards, commissions, public universities, and community colleges. The resolution also requires BEP to submit an annual (or upon request from the Council) report of its goal waiver determinations to the BEP Council.



### Supplier Diversity Management Portal

On July 15, 2024, the [Supplier Diversity Management Portal](https://cei.illinois.gov/about-the-commission/supplier-diversity-management-system.html) (SDMP) was made available for public use. Purchasing entities can now search for BEP and Veterans Business Program (VBP) certified firms (for goal setting and Utilization Plan responsiveness purposes) and the executed contracts with supplier diversity goals in the portal. New certification application, renewal, and revision submissions were restarted on this date. Please visit <https://cei.illinois.gov/about-the-commission/supplier-diversity-management-system.html> regularly for the latest information and portal updates.

### Online Supplier Diversity Training

CEI created a [comprehensive online supplier diversity training](#) using OneNet. Completing this online training is the first step in understanding how CEI promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion within Illinois' procurement landscape. This training provides an extensive overview of the core components and elements of CEI's responsibilities, guiding principles, the BEP Council, the VBP and BEP. It is geared toward BEP Council members, CEI commissioners, purchasing entity personnel, public members interested in procurement, and stakeholders interested in promoting equitable procurement practices.

### Race and Gender Wage Report

CEI distributed its first Race Gender Wage reporting template to agencies, boards, commissions, public universities, and community colleges on August 2, 2024. Under [20 ILCS 405/405-535](#), each State agency and public institution of higher education must annually submit a report categorized by race and gender specifying the respective wage earnings of employees to CEI. By understanding the current landscape of wage distribution across purchasing entities, CEI can better identify and address disparities that may exist based on race and gender and help ensure that all employees are fairly compensated. The final compiled report will be available on CEI's website and delivered to the Governor and General Assembly.

### Fiscal Year 2024 BEP Annual Expenditure and Service Category Report

The Annual Expenditure Report details achievement levels by each Illinois purchasing entity (agencies, boards, commissions, public universities, and community colleges) toward the 30% aspirational BEP goal in the BEP Act. The Service Category Report referenced in the BEP Act identifies professional services contracts in accounting, architecture, information technology, insurance, investment, and legal services with service firms owned by minorities, women, and persons with disabilities, including BEP-certified firms. The BEP Act requires the BEP Council to file an Annual Expenditure and Service Category Report with the Governor's Office and the General Assembly. Reporting templates have been distributed to purchasing entities subject to the BEP Act that must file their Annual Expenditure and Service Category Report with CEI. Reporting templates are due by Thursday, October 31, 2024.

### Phishing Scam

Several BEP and VBP-certified vendors received phishing emails from internet pirates pretending to work for CEI. We take our responsibility to protect your personal information extremely seriously. CEI worked with the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology's (DoIT) Division of Information Security to block the URL in the email with this fraudulent link. DoIT also contacted the platform provider to have the page removed. We ask that you remain vigilant in preventing fraud and protect yourself from identity theft.

If you have been the victim of identity theft or believe your personal or financial information may have been compromised:

- Contact your financial institution immediately and alert them of the situation.
- If you have disclosed sensitive information in a phishing attack, you should also contact one of the three major credit bureaus and discuss whether you need to place a fraud alert on your file, which will help prevent thieves from opening a new account in your name or your business name.
- You can report the incident to the Illinois Attorney General's Identity Theft Hotline at 1-866-999-5630 (7-1-1 relay service) or visit their Consumer Protection webpage at <https://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/consumer-protection/identity-theft/>.

- If you believe your business or clients are victims of identity theft, you may report it to the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) at [REV.IdentityTheftAffidavit@Illinois.gov](mailto:REV.IdentityTheftAffidavit@Illinois.gov).
- Report all suspicious contacts to the [Federal Trade Commission](#) by calling 1-877-IDTHEFT.

### New Public Meeting Location

On July 17, 2024, CEI held its first public meeting in the Jesse White State Building at 115 S. LaSalle in Chicago's financial district. This facility offers several spacious meeting room options on the building's 8th floor that can accommodate the public meeting needs of CEI commissioners and the BEP Council. Each room for public meetings is equipped with Wi-Fi, a hands-free audio and video intercom system, a ceiling-mounted LCD projector, and a projection screen. Future public meetings in this location will include the CEI monthly commissioner meeting, full BEP Council meetings, and BEP Council subcommittee meetings. Check the CEI public meetings page for a look at upcoming meetings scheduled by CEI.

### CEI Website Updates

There have been several updates and changes to the [CEI website](#). The new layout is designed to improve functionality, enhance user experience, and provide quality content. These updates give visitors a unique and informative experience while visiting the website. We are excited about the redesign and hope users find it more accessible. **Here's what's new:**

Vendor Resources

This section provides interested vendors with certification information, upcoming outreach and training available through CEI, and a business guidance section.

Purchasing Entity Resources

This section provides supplier diversity compliance information and helpful guidance to State agencies, boards, commissions, public universities, and community colleges.

Supplier Diversity Management Portal

This section provides easy access to the new Supplier Diversity Management Portal.

## BEP AND VBP CERTIFICATION CORNER

### Certification Benefits

Unlock the benefits of certification with the State of Illinois! By becoming BEP and VBP-certified, you gain access to various benefits. Your business will be featured in CEI's public online directory, ensuring visibility among State procurement professionals and potential prime vendors. Once certified, you gain access to bid on specialized contract opportunities. Various municipalities and organizations recognize BEP and VBP certification. Best of all, certification is FREE!

### How To Register

Businesses that want to become fully certified BEP or VBP vendors should visit CEI's Supplier Diversity Management Portal (SDMP) at [supplierdiversitymanagementportal.illinois.gov/home.aspx](https://supplierdiversitymanagementportal.illinois.gov/home.aspx).

### I'm Certified. Now What?

Register on Procurement Platforms:

We strongly recommend visiting and registering on the Illinois Procurement Gateway (IPG) at [ipg.illinois.gov/home.aspx](https://ipg.illinois.gov/home.aspx). The IPG is an online vendor portal that gathers business information from vendors who wish to conduct business with state agencies and universities. Instead of submitting required information in paper form with every solicitation response, vendors can electronically submit the information in advance.

Chief Procurement Officer of General Services: The CPO-GS oversees the goods and services purchases for roughly 65 State agencies, boards, and commissions. Learn more about CPO-GS at <https://cpo-general.illinois.gov/>.

Chief Procurement Officer of Higher Education: The CPO-HE oversees purchasing by State universities. Learn more about CPO-HE at <https://cpo-highered.illinois.gov/>.

Chief Procurement Officer of Capital Development Board: The CPO-CDB oversees vertical construction and construction-related services purchases. Learn more about CPO-CDB at <https://cpo-cdb.illinois.gov/>.

Chief Procurement Officer of Illinois Department of Transportation: The CPO-IDOT oversees horizontal construction and construction-related services purchases. Learn more about CPO-IDOT at <https://cpo-dot.illinois.gov/>.

#### Enroll in Notifications:

We strongly recommend that all BEP and VBP-certified vendors register with each of the four State of Illinois procurement bulletins to see and receive notifications about potential State contracting opportunities.

## CEI STAFF UPDATES

CEI has hired a new HR Specialist who started on September 16, 2024. Postings for the Assistant General Counsel and Certification Analyst positions have now closed. The Financial Analyst/Agency Procurement Officer candidate is scheduled to start with CEI before the end of September, while the new Assistant General Counsel begins during the first week of October. We encourage applicants who are passionate about public service and interested in monitoring supplier diversity to check CEI's careers webpage regularly or follow us on our social media platforms for job updates. Opportunities will continuously arise as CEI grows.

## 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.



In the first quarter of fiscal year 2025, CEI engaged with diverse vendors and communities around Illinois through targeted outreach efforts and initiatives to foster equity and inclusion and to support underserved small businesses. In July, CEI participated in multiple panel discussions and presentations to educate the public on the BEP and VBP certification process, advantages, and resources available to small business owners. In August, CEI celebrated and recognized Black-owned businesses' remarkable achievements and contributions to the State's economy by attending various National Black Business Month events.

### Outreach Events CEI Participated in this Quarter

Chicago Latina Business Foundation Procurement Expo	7/2/2024	Illinois State Fair (Veterans & Gold Star Family Day)	8/11/2024
UIUC Construction Summit	7/9/2024	Illinois State Fair (Senior & Scout Day)	8/12/2024
Southwestern Illinois College Procurement Event	7/16/2024	16th District State Senator Preston End of Summer Bash	8/18/2024
IDES State Employment Career and Resource Fair	7/17/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Training with DoIT	9/4/2024
2nd Annual Latin@ Economic Summit – Rising Together Procurement Expo	7/18/2024	The City of Chicago Procurement Symposium	9/5/2024
Elgin Area Chamber Virtual BEP/VBP Certification Workshop	7/18/2024	Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Business Summit	9/6/2024
Governors State University Vendor Meet and Greet	7/30/2024	Women Business Development Center Conference	9/12/2024
Black Women's Expo 2024	8/3/2024	CPO-GS IL Small Business Reverse Vendor Fair	9/18/2024
Illinois State Black Chamber of Commerce Convention	8/7/2024	2024 Raices Public Policy Conference	9/19/2024
Illinois State Black Chamber of Commerce Convention	8/8/2024	Village of Monee Hispanic Heritage Celebration Event	9/20/2024

### CEI Public Meetings this Quarter

BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Office Hours	7/3/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Office Hours	9/4/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Office Hours	7/10/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Office Hours	9/11/2024
CEI Monthly Meeting	7/17/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Office Hours	9/18/2024
BEP Council Outreach Subcommittee Meeting	7/26/2024	CEI Monthly Meeting	9/18/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Office Hours	8/14/2024	BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Office Hours	9/25/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Office Hours	8/21/2024	BEP Council Outreach Subcommittee Meeting	9/27/2024
BEP/VBP Certification Virtual Office Hours	8/28/2024		