

Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion

Nina Harris, Chairperson
Alexandria Wilson, Executive Director
115 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 4N
Chicago, IL 60603

APPROVED Jun 30 2026

NOTICE

Business Enterprise Council for Minorities, Females and Persons with Disabilities OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

1:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Location: Jesse White State Building, 115 S. LaSalle St., Chicago, IL 60603, 4th Fl., Lincoln Conference Room

Lincoln Tower 524 S. 2nd St, Springfield, IL 62701 Suite 502, CEI Executive Conference Room
Virtual: Webex Meeting

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The Outreach Subcommittee was called to order by Subcommittee Chair Bola Delano at 1:37 p.m.

- In accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120/1 et seq., the Commission provided telephonic and video access to the meeting so that members of the public can monitor the meeting and has updated its website to keep the public fully apprised of the Commission activities relating to virtual participation.

Roll Call of Subcommittee Members

- Roll call was conducted by Parliamentarian, Internal/External Communications & Legislative Affairs Officer Nikita Richards.
- Member Megan Nakano was initially absent but later arrived in person. A quorum of the public body was present.

BEP Council ATTENDANCE ROSTER: COUNCIL MEMBERS

Members	In person Chicago	In person Springfield	via Webex	Absent
Alan Brazil			X	
Bola Delano	X			
Cory Gold	X		X	
Megan Nakano	X			
Javier Haro	X			
Crystal Young				X

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BEP Council ATTENDANCE ROSTER: AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Agency	Representative	In person - Chicago	In person - Springfield	via Webex
Illinois Commission on	Nikita Richards			X
Equity and Inclusion	Hilaree Butler			X
	Angela Phillips	X		
	Andres Padua			X
	Alexandria Wilson			X

II. **Approval of Minutes:** January 27, 2026 (Action)

- Subcommittee Member Megan Nakano moved to approve January 27, 2026, minutes. Motions to be approved by member Megan Nakano. Member Javier Haro seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

III. **Ongoing Business**

A. **Outreach Report – Nikita Richards, Internal/External Communications & Legislative Affairs Officer.**

- i. Ms. Richards reported that the Outreach Unit continues to actively engage diverse businesses and stakeholders across the State of Illinois through targeted education, partnerships, and certification readiness initiatives.

Recent Outreach Activities:

- Hosted a hands-on certification readiness session with Chamber 57 (March 5), focused on building strong BEP application files.
- Conducted a BEP readiness workshop (March 10), covering required documentation, organization strategies, common application errors, and financial record preparation.
- Participated in the Illinois APEX Government Contracting Vendor Summit (March 17), where Deputy Director LaTasha Binder served as a panelist and BEP resources were distributed.

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- Continued collaboration with external partners, including participation in the upcoming 2026 Women's Business Conference hosted by Wintrust and the Chicago Latina Business Foundation

B. Certify & Thrive 2026 Campaign Discussion.

- 332 additional phone-bank calls completed in February, with an average completion rate of approximately 90%.
- 6,602 vendors engaged through follow-up communications and campaign outreach.
- Increased inbound inquiries from vendors, indicating heightened engagement and interest in certification.
- Cross-agency participation improved, with Commissioners and the Mentor-Protégé Program Unit leading phone bank efforts for the month.

C. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy:

- Strengthened partnerships with community organizations and business development groups to expand outreach reach.
- Leveraged stakeholder networks to amplify messaging through social media and internal communications.
- Emphasized a collaborative, "shared responsibility" model for increasing BEP certification statewide.

D. Upcoming Outreach Efforts:

1. March 26: City of Peoria Government Contracting Opportunity Expo
2. March 30: 4th Annual Connect and Contract Summit
3. April 1–2: IDOT "Today's Challenge, Tomorrow's Reward" Conference
4. April 7: Chicagoland Certification Workshop for Veterans

E. Subcommittee Discussion:

- i. Member Cory Gold raised concerns about timeliness of event notifications and expressed interest in earlier engagement opportunities for agencies such as IDHS.
 - a. Ms. Richards invited members to coordinate directly with the Outreach Unit and offered to facilitate partnerships through CEI's outreach participation process.
- ii. Several Members reported independent outreach contributions, including:

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- a. Member Megan Nakano discussed an upcoming Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois Business Fair scheduled for May 1, 2026 which will provide legal resources for small businesses and include a focus on BEP certification.
- b. Member Delano, along with Member Jesse Martinez, reported involvement with the Black Contractors Owner Executives Group, which is conducting a series of training programs for entry-level contractors. Member Delano indicated she attended approximately six sessions and supported participants with BEP certification guidance. Approximately 40 participants were reported to be engaged in the program.
- c. Members discussed participation in various industries and certification-focused events that support business development and outreach efforts.
- d. Member Delano also shared her participation in a CHUBB apprenticeship initiative aimed at increasing minority representation in the commercial insurance field, including providing information on BEP certification during program sessions.
- iii. Ms. Richards requested that members submit summaries of their outreach activities to be incorporated into CEI Commission reporting and to highlight Council engagement.
- iv. Chair Delano reported that Commissioner Montgomery requested information regarding which BEP-certified vendors have performed work with the Office of the Comptroller. She noted that this inquiry is intended to assess the extent to which certified vendors are being utilized in State operations. Chair Delano further indicated that she is awaiting the requested data and will share the information with the Subcommittee once it becomes available.
- v. Member Delano discussed data system and portal limitations, with a recommendation to explore enhancements that would allow CEI to better receive and analyze agency-submitted data.
- vi. Chair Delano noted that Comptroller's SAMS portal is now largely complete; however, CEI's current systems are not fully compatible and are unable to effectively receive or interpret the data being shared. She indicated that this limitation hinders the agency's ability to track vendor utilization and suggested that system enhancements or upgrades may be necessary to improve data integration and reporting capabilities.

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- vii. Member Cory Gold raised a question regarding alignment between outreach efforts and the Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP). Ms. Richards clarified that participation requires submission through CEI's formal intake process, with additional program expansion and promotion forthcoming.

IV. Public Comment

- None.

V. Adjournment (*Action*)

- Motion to adjourn moved by Member Megan Nakano, seconded by Member Javier Haro. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.