



Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion

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

APPROVED APR 15 2026

NOTICE

State of Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion CEI MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

1:30 PM

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

Location: Lincoln Tower Plaza, 524 S. Second St., Ste. 502, Springfield, IL 62701

WebEx

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

- Chair Harris called the meeting to order at 1:30 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.
- Chair Harris conducted roll call of the Commissioners.
 - i. Commissioners attending in person at a State facility:
 - 1. Chair Nina Harris
 - 2. Commissioner Richard Costes
 - 3. Commissioner Ennedy Rivera
 - 4. Commissioner Van Austin
 - 5. Commissioner Ovelia Smith-Barton
 - 6. Commissioner Bruce Montgomery
 - ii. Commissioner attending virtually:
 - 1. Commissioner Benjamin Salentine
 - iii. Commissioner Montgomery moved to approve the remote participation of Commissioner Salentine. Seconded by Commissioner Austin. Motion carried by vote.
 - iv. A quorum of the public body was present.

2. Minutes: February 18, 2026 (Action)

- Commissioner Austin moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Smith-Barton. Motion carried by vote.

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3. Operations Reports

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

- Report to be provided at the next meeting.

B. Administrative Report – Robin Streets, Chief of Staff

- FY25 Class Exemption requests were included on the full BFP Council agenda for the January 26 meeting.
- An in-person quorum was not present; the Council was not allowed to take action. The meeting proceeded for informational purposes only.

- A bug fix was implemented on the BFP Class Contract Exemption Request form, and the updated link has now been posted on the Compliance webpage.
- CEI is actively updating its website to improve accessibility for users with disabilities. Enhancements include modifications to documents currently used to apply for, gain access to, or participate in services, programs, or activities offered by the Commission, Business Enterprise Program, Veterans Business Program and Mentor Protégé Program.
- The Certification Unit will begin tracking data to monitor the rate at which application denials are reviewed by the Certification Subcommittee, as well as the rate at which those denials are overturned.

- Tracking helps ensure the certification process is consistent, fair, and aligned with policy.
- Operations staff was notified of phishing attempts disguised as communications from the Commission on Equity and Inclusion that have been distributed to our vendor community.
- CEI has worked with the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology's (DoIT) Division of Information Security to block the URL associated with this fraudulent link.
- DoIT is also contacting the platform provider to have the page removed.

C. Financial and Human Capital Report – Tracey Kenney, Chief of Finance and Human Capital Officer

- Appropriations Hearings are scheduled for April 1 and April 15.
- Recruiting:

- CEI wrapped up Panel Interviews and is working with CMS to determine the order of qualified candidates to make an offer accordingly for the Office Associate Position.



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- Panel interviews will begin on March 30 for the Administrative Assistant / Coordinator (OMA) position.
- The In-Take Specialist will start on April 1.
- An Executive I – Business Data Analyst position is expected to be posted soon.

D. Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Compliance Unit and Veterans Business Program (VBP) Reports – Jacob Perez, CEI Deputy Director

- The Compliance Unit is finalizing updates to the BEP and VBP forms which include new utilization plans, goal setting forms and waiver request forms.
- In addition, the Unit is developing training videos to accompany the forms.
- The March Compliance Subcommittee meeting was canceled due to lack of quorum. The next meeting will be May 19.
- Veterans Business Program Metrics:
 - 217 certified vendors
 - a. 35 African American owned
 - b. 1 American Indian owned
 - c. 9 Asian American owned
 - d. 136 Caucasian American owned
 - e. 36 Hispanic owned
- CEI was present at the Building Americas Future Veterans Infrastructure.
- VBP annual reports were submitted March 27 to the Governor's Office.

E. Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Certification Unit and Mentor Protégé Program (MPP) Reports – LaTasha Binder, CEI Deputy Director

- Certification Unit
 - The Intake Specialist role has been filled with the candidate starting on April 1st.
 - a. This role will enhance and streamline the application process by ensuring complete and accurate intake and evaluation of applicant files, assisting vendors by providing clarity and addressing their concerns at the onset of the application process.
 - b. This role will also assist with conducting vendor outreach.
 - The Certification unit is actively participating in the Certify & Thrive campaign aimed at increasing BEP certification participation.
 - a. The team is working collaboratively with Outreach to leverage vendor and stakeholder networks, reinforce instructions for firms to update their information, and enhance public understanding of the certification process.

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- b. This coordinated effort is expected to improve application quality and broaden access to certification opportunities across the vendor community.
 - The unit continues to provide assistance related to the certification process and application through our weekly virtual office hours.
 - a. This time is distinguished for the public to ask any questions about the certification process or establish a one-on-one meeting to address questions.
 - b. This assistance is provided in English and Spanish.
 - Certification is continuing to connect with our partner agencies to strengthen our relationships and stay abreast of any changes concerning our respective programs.
 - Current BEP certified vendor pool:
 - a. 2,790 active certified vendors
- Mentor Protégé Program:
 - MPP unit is finalizing the testing of program operations.
 - a. Testing is nearing completion. Upon completion, the unit will move to the next phase of launch which is communication to those who have expressed interest in the program as a mentor.
 - MPP Metrics
 - a. Interest in the MPP program is as follows: As of 3/9/26
 - i. 135 interested entities:
 - 1. 22 Self-identified as mentors
 - 2. 108 self-identified as proteges
 - 3. 5 who are unsure which category they fall into

4. Ongoing Business

- A. Illinois Hiring Practices (30 ILCS 574/40-10(4)) – Commissioner Ennedi Rivera
 - Commissioner Rivera extended thanks to the University of Illinois Career Services team
 - She also highlighted the recruitment work of the Department of Central Management Services and the University of Illinois.
 - CMS has been engaging with students to create awareness of career opportunities available in State government.
 - CEI will continue to support efforts by strengthening partnerships between universities and State agencies.



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B. Stakeholder Engagement Updates

- Commissioner Smith-Barton introduced Mr. Alexander Buckles of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA) with McCormick Place. Mr Buckles will present on MPEA at next month's Commission meeting.
- Commissioner Montgomery shared that he is a member of the planning committee of the Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council's CBOF Steering Committee.
 - There is an event on April 17 to celebrate 59 years of supplier development innovation in Chicago.
- Commissioner Montgomery also shared that he served as a moderator for a panel discussion at the Apex Illinois Government Contracting Summit.
- Commissioner Salentine shared that he and Commissioner Costes continue to work towards thought leadership initiatives and engagement activities related to the people with disabilities business community.

5. New Business

A. Procurement Scorecard 2026 Report – Commissioner Richard Costes

- CEI launched the Scorecard Survey in January.
- The deadline for completion for agencies and Public Institutes of Higher Education was March 2.
 - Current completion rate: 70%
 - Those who have not responded have been contacted.
- Preliminary reviews have begun, and Commissioner are preparing for the full analysis phase.

B. Annual Report Updates – Alexandria Wilson, Executive Director

- Executive Director Wilson discussed the BEP Annual Expenditure Report, the BEP Service Category Report and the Veterans Business Program report and how the reports reflect the State's progress on supplier diversity.
- These reports show where we are meeting or exceeding our aspirational goals, where we're gaining ground and where we still have structural work to do.
- The reports also represent a mature repeatable reporting process that now influences policy decisions, targeted outreach, and technical assistance.
- Highlights:
 - In FY25, entities reported more than \$53 billion in total contracting with roughly \$7.8 billion in non-construction and \$6.8 billion in construction dollars subject to the BEP goals.
 - Purchasing entities subject to the BEP Act collectively achieved more than \$1.6 billion in BEP spend across construction and non-construction.
 - Over half of all certified BEP firms had at least one state contract in FY25.

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- In non-construction, BFP vendors earned over \$1 billion with women owned firms accounting for over \$592,000,000 and minority firms for roughly \$395,000,000.
- Spending with BFP firms continued to grow, indicating that even with a smaller certification pool, achievement remained unaffected and in fact increased.
- Community Colleges reported approximately a hundred million dollars in professional services expenditures with nearly \$29 million going to diversity owned firms across.
- In FY25, the State expended roughly \$67.8 million in eligible contract dollars with VBP certified businesses, which is up more than \$1.1 million from FY24.

6. Public Comment

- Tracy Sullivan shared that she helps firms get certified and some have expressed frustration with the amount of documentation requested to be certified. Ms. Sullivan offered to meet with staff to provide in-depth feedback for possible improvements to the BFP portal.
- Chair Harris shared that staff will reach out to set up time to meet with Ms. Sullivan.

7. Adjournment (Action)

- Commissioner Salentine moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Rivera. Motion carried by vote.
- Chair Harris adjourned the meeting at 2:24 p.m.