



# The Top Ten Principles For Successful Economic Inclusion Programs and Practices

COMPASS Institute for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



## VISION

To implement DEI best practices and elevate performance standards.

## MISSION

COMPASS INSTITUTE For Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, Inc. was formed in 2021. Donna Stevenson Robinson is the President. The organization is spearheaded by a vision of Diversity and Economic Inclusion experts having an interest in transforming economic and social disparities. COMPASS has evolved from an annual conference event to a global research and advisory firm providing information, advice, and tools for leaders in economic inclusion, procurement, diversity management and contract compliance functions. In that interest, COMPASS fosters the establishment DEI policies and best practices to be accepted and implemented for **procurement systems within** corporate and government for the economic inclusion of historically underutilized business owners and workforces into mainstream of domestic and international markets. In partnership with organizations of similar mission. Finally, COMPASS seeks to address barriers that reduce equitable access to markets and achieve economic inclusion for all groups into the mainstream ecosystem.

## GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

COMPASS will facilitate positive and sustainable inclusion and economic benefits to historically underutilized workforce and business communities by servicing organizations globally with professional development, education, and implementation of Diversity and Economic Inclusion standards and practices. COMPASS will achieve this through the following:

- Global Training
- Professional Development
- Consulting, Assessment, and Economic Impact Analysis Services
- Diversity & Economic Inclusion management systems and services
- COMPASS Membership Offerings

## PLATINUM STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES

The following “Top Ten Principles” represent the key elements for successful supplier diversity programs and practices. These principles are intended as guideposts for those public and private sector signatories that aspire to achieve a “platinum standard” in their inclusion of underutilized segments of the business community in their contracting and purchasing activities. Heretofore, such diverse suppliers have all-too-often have found themselves relegated to being mere spectators along the shores of the economic mainstream. Through its encouragement of the universal adoption and application of these principles, COMPASS seeks to transform the global marketplace into one in which the historical disadvantages of race, gender, and national origin are forever eliminated as factors impeding the accumulation of wealth and the achievement of prosperity within any community.



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- (1) **Clarity in Mission.** Economic inclusion programs and policies should provide a clear and succinct Mission Statement that defines what success is, how success will be achieved, and how success will be measured. Who are the intended beneficiaries of the program or policy? What are the identified barriers to their mainstream economic inclusion? How will the identified barriers be addressed? By what standards will diverse suppliers have fully integrated into the mainstream of the supply chain (e.g., relative availability, revenues, diversification across industry segments, rate of growth, relative capacity, bid success rate, prime vs. subcontract participation)?
- (2) **Comprehensive Outreach & Solicitation.** Economic inclusion programs and policies should include aggressive outreach to attract and solicit new diverse sources of supply. Such outreach should include in-person matchmaking efforts, automated centralized bidder registration systems to facilitate fair and timely dissemination of bid solicitations and contract opportunities, and proactive recruitment efforts to encourage diverse suppliers to diversify products and services to meet upcoming procurement demands. In addition, signatories to these principles should freely share supply chain sources for diverse suppliers internally and externally.
- (3) **Maximized Supply Chain Access.** Economic inclusion strategies should include a critical review of all supplier requirements and procurement procedures to eliminate or reduce any unnecessarily restrictive barriers that tend to impede or prevent small businesses and new entrants from becoming suppliers (e.g., experience requirements, bonding, credit ratings, insurance, bundling of contract requirements, name brand bid specifications, prequalification requirements, slow payment, and brief response times to bid solicitations).
- (4) **Identification / Certification of Historically Underutilized Business Segments.** Economic inclusion programs and policies should clearly identify and define program beneficiaries based upon objective data reflecting that each such segment of the diverse business population has been persistently and significantly underutilized as compared to its relative availability in the relevant marketplace. Such focus and concentration of program resources is necessary in order to avoid dilution of program effectiveness. In addition, the integrity of the economic inclusion program or policy is directly tied to achievement of its stated mission.
- (5) **Data-Driven Goals and Affirmative Procurement Strategies.** Economic inclusion programs and policies should include special incentives, strategies, and procurement methods that are designed to enhance contract opportunities for, and awards to, diverse suppliers at both the prime contract and subcontract levels. The size of any annual aspirational goals, contract-specific utilization goals, or evaluation preferences used in the contract award process should be rationally related to objective data regarding qualifications, relative availability, and capacity of diverse suppliers.



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- (6) **Administrative Accountability.** Economic inclusion programs and policies should clearly specify which personnel within the signatory's organization are responsible for administering each aspect of the program or policy. It is important that all departments and units that are involved in any aspect of the procurement / contracting process share in the responsibility for administration of the program and achievement of its economic inclusion mission. Duties and responsibilities for the administration of each aspect should be clearly assigned under the terms of the program or policy. Personnel that exhibit exemplary behavior in their performance of such administrative duties and responsibilities should be rewarded (e.g., public recognition, bonuses, compensatory leave). Personnel that fail to fulfill their duties and responsibilities should conversely be held accountable (e.g., in personnel evaluations, compensation considerations, and eligibility for promotions).
- (7) **Compliance.** Economic inclusion programs and policies should contain terms to ensure compliance by prime contractors and vendors with established goals and affirmative procurement requirements that are applied to the procurement process and to specific contracts. Exemplary compliance should be rewarded (e.g., public recognition, enhanced future contract opportunities). Failure to comply with economic inclusion requirements should have negative consequences for the non-complying party that are reflected in the program policy and procedures and in material contractual terms.
- (8) **Mainstream Participation.** Economic inclusion programs and policies should provide for significant prime contract participation and subcontract participation commensurate with the availability and capacity of diverse suppliers. Moreover, the distribution of contract awards to diverse suppliers as measured by various parameters (e.g., contract size, industry segment, and contract duration) should be equitable and in furtherance of the program mission statement, and as compared to similarly situated non-diverse suppliers.
- (9) **Enhanced Growth and Capacity.** Economic inclusion programs and policies should establish practices that encourage the sustained growth of diverse suppliers and promote their diversification into the supply chain for those goods and services for which there is inadequate supplier competition and/or increasing demand by the signatory organization. Such mechanisms and strategies should also include resources for upgrading the capacity of diverse supplier firms as necessary for them to become competitively viable sources of supply in the economic mainstream.
- (10) **Periodic Review and Internal Audits.** Economic inclusion programs and policies should be subject to review on at least an annual basis to objectively measure progress towards achievement of the program's overall objectives, and the degree of effectiveness for each of the economic inclusion strategies that have been employed during the prior year. Where appropriate, such reviews should prompt the consideration, adoption, and implementation of new policies, procedures, and practices designed to accelerate program success. Independent internal audits of the signatory's procurement process and economic inclusion



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program and policies are a favored means for establishing a detailed road map for programmatic improvements. As transparency is the hallmark for such reviews and internal audits, these efforts should result in publicly available written reports that detail and document program results at all stages of the bid solicitation, contract award / supplier selection, and contract compliance processes, and also provide the granular data upon which the conclusions and recommendations of the reports are based.

For more information and assessment services, contact  
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