

## COMMUNITY BENEFITS ADVISORY GROUP (CBAG)

### MEETING SUMMARY #12

Date and Time: Thursday, August 22, 2024 / 9:30 – 11:30 am

Location: Hybrid (In-person and Zoom Meeting) and [YouTube livestream](#)

Number of concurrent YouTube viewers: 6

### OUTCOMES

- CBAG members learned about the Workforce Equity and the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program Plans
- CBAG members discussed and brainstormed potential community benefits in the Workforce Equity and Economic Opportunity category

### WELCOME

Johnell Bell, Principal Equity Officer and Co-facilitator, opened the August 2024 CBAG meeting. He then reviewed instructions to access closed captioning, meeting participation tips, ASL interpretation reminders and public input instructions.

Emilee Thomas-Peralta, Equity Team and Co-facilitator, walked members through the group agreements.

Greg Johnson, Program Administrator, welcomed attendees and thanked them for their participation.

City of Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle and City of Portland Deputy City Administrator Priya Dhanapal extended a warm welcome to everyone.

Bell and Thomas-Peralta led a round of introductions by asking members to share their names, organizational affiliation or at-large status, and pronouns if they wished. Members also answered a check-in question, “What Olympic sport would you love to compete in (assuming you had trained and qualified for it)?” as part of their introductions.

Thomas-Peralta then provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Thomas-Peralta explained how to provide public comments, as well as how to submit comments after the meeting. There were no written public comments submitted prior to the meeting.

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After Thomas Peralta's explanation, Shannon Singleton, Community Benefits Lead took over to moderate the public comments.

There were three members of the public present to provide public comments.

Julie Gibson expressed concerns about the qualitative data collection discussed in the July 25 CBAG meeting on the health analysis. She asked for clarification on how the advisory groups are gathering data from neighborhoods adjacent to the freeway, which will be impacted by the bridge program. Noting that the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is expected in early fall, Julie emphasized the importance of understanding this process as a resident living near the freeway.

Julie Arenz was invited to speak but didn't provide any public comments.

Adam Salman, who identified as deaf in the Zoom chat ('I am deaf' and 'I am ready yes'), had access to an ASL interpreter for public comments. He indicated that he was only present to watch the meeting.

## PROGRAM UPDATES

Program Administrator Johnson shared the following program updates:

- FHWA Grant Celebration (August 8): The IBR program celebrated the historic \$1.499 billion Bridge Investment Program (BIP) federal grant. This significant milestone, announced in July, was highlighted at the event. Speakers included FHWA Administrator Shailen Bhatt, U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, Representative Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, ODOT Director Kris Strickler, WSDOT Secretary Roger Millar, and IBR Program Administrator Greg Johnson. Tribal leadership, program partners, legislators, and representatives from the Building Trades and labor organizations also joined the celebration, underscoring the importance of this achievement for the program and the region.
- Community Engagement: The program engaged with the community through presentations and summer events to inform the public, gather feedback, and raise awareness. These activities aimed to keep the community updated on the program's progress and provided opportunities for direct interaction and information sharing. Engagement activities included:
  - Virtual Community Briefings (August 20 and 24)
  - Recent Presentations:
    - Oregon Transportation Commission
    - City of Vancouver's Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission
    - City of Vancouver's Parking Advisory Committee
  - Summer Tabling Events:
    - Downtown Vancouver Farmers Market
    - Bridgeton Neighborhood Association Annual Summer Picnic
    - Providence Bridge Pedal
    - Vancouver Waterfront Concert Series
    - Portland Summer Concert Series
    - Kenton Farmers Market

## Questions and comments from CBAG Members:

CBAG Member: How much lead time will the public receive before the Draft SEIS is published—will it be one day, two weeks, or a month in advance?

Johnson: The program is hoping to provide a 3-week notice before the Draft SEIS is published. The process involves obtaining signatures and getting the Draft SEIS published in the Federal Register. Once the program has the necessary signatures, it will announce when the 60-day public comment period opens.

## PRESENTATION ON THE DRAFT WORKFORCE EQUITY AND DBE PROGRAM PLANS

Thomas-Peralta transitioned the meeting to the next segment, introducing Yamaya Hall-Ruiz, IBR Workforce Equity Lead. She explained that Hall-Ruiz would present the Workforce Equity Program Plan, providing context before discussing proposed benefits or recommendations in the Workforce Equity and Economic Opportunity category. The aim was to give everyone an overview of the program's current efforts in workforce equity so the discussion could build on the work already being done.

Hall-Ruiz presented the Workforce Equity Program Plan, starting with an overview of the plan, including the aspirational targets: "The IBR program aims to achieve workforce equity by increasing the representation of equity priority communities in the construction industry. The IBR program will establish targets based on the availability of these groups in the local labor market, as well as best practices and benchmarks from other states: women, BIPOC, and people with disabilities."

Thomas-Peralta mentioned that, in setting aspirational goals, the program has received feedback from both this group and the Equity Advisory Group (EAG) about the need to intentionally include a goal for individuals with disabilities and the program is considering these goals.

Monika Johnson, Equity Team, presented the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program Plan and Workforce Opportunities. She discussed construction packaging challenges, revisited the conceptual package sequence and emphasized IBR's commitment to ensuring economic opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses, BIPOC workers, workers with disabilities, and youth. She also provided an overview of potential design and construction opportunities, strategies for supporting small and disadvantaged businesses, and DBE/SBE outreach activities.

## Questions and comments from CBAG Members:

CBAG Member: Could we go back to Slide 23? The first bullet—could you refresh my memory on who the current consultant contract is with?

Bell: It's WSP.

CBAG Member: I'm interested in knowing how much of these program plans we've heard about have already been considered for our community benefits list. Are these conversations informing each other, or is that yet to happen? How will the community benefits package we're working on today influence the development of these programs going forward?

Shannon Singleton, Community Benefits Lead: We are working closely with the various teams, ensuring they have seen all proposed benefits to date and are considering how to incorporate them into their plans. After today's meeting, we'll share any new benefits raised with those teams as well. Beyond these teams, we are also coordinating with the procurement team, especially for contract specifications that might be influenced by your feedback. We hold two monthly meetings with other teams to keep them informed and ensure your input is integrated. Additionally, we're collaborating with those working on future labor agreements to incorporate relevant ideas from your discussions.

CBAG Member: When you refer to teams, does WSP have the DBE team?

Singleton: IBR has a DBE team, and under WSP, there are several subcontractors, including Espousal Strategies. The DBE team specifically focuses on DBE efforts. The procurement team is also part of the WSP team. Regarding the workforce equity program, that's primarily led by Hall-Ruiz, with support from other members of the equity team.

CBAG Member: Could you do me a quick favor and show me a graphic of who's doing what, where, and when? As we look at all these different things, we're seeing more subgroups, and it's getting harder to keep track. I just need to know where everyone fits in.

Singleton: Yes, we can.

Johnson: We're planning to issue grants later this year to help build the workforce pathway, likely to roll out in the fall. We also meet monthly with groups like Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME), Professional Business Development Group (PBDG), National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC) Oregon (covers OR and SW WA), and Tabor 100 to understand the needs of small, women-, and minority-owned businesses and help them prepare to participate in the program. Additionally, we hold office hours for these businesses to learn more and get involved. There's a lot of effort going into this.

CBAG Member: The program has chosen a delivery system that relies on an ecosystem of curated consultants, with WSP as the prime and others under them. This will evolve over the life of the program. It's important to know how these values and commitments will be embedded in the program and not jeopardized as the consultant ecosystem changes. This work, including the Workforce Equity Plan and the DBE Program Plan, will inform the contract specifications embedded in every contract for all packages. Right?

Johnson: We have commitments from both DOTs, as well as other entities like Trimet and C-Tran, that will be delivering contracts. These commitments to equity values, as championed by groups like the Community Benefits Advisory Group and the Equity Advisory Group, will be embedded in contract specifications and may also be included in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

(SEIS). We're ensuring that these commitments are captured and upheld, with dedicated groups in place to hold us accountable. This is not just a promise for today but a sustained commitment throughout the program.

CBAG Member: That's the risk we face, considering this project spans a decade or more. How can we ensure that these values consistently translate into action over that time? We've all seen projects where commitments like apprentice hours were made, but in the end, they weren't fulfilled, and the fines were paid without real accountability. That won't be acceptable for this project. We need systems in place to ensure this happens.

Singleton: Administrator Johnson and Assistant Program Administrators Ray Mabey and Frank Green are helping us create a Community Benefits Plan that will capture all the community benefits work in one document, including accountability measures. This way communities won't need to look through multiple documents to track implementation.

City of Portland Staff: As the program engages with groups like OAME and NAMC about community readiness to bid for the project, where are the resources to support this, such as technical assistance? For example, I connected Hall-Ruiz with City of Portland's program to increase women and minority professionals in trades. This ties into accountability—like in Portland, where we aim for 20% minority participation but often fall short due to a lack of ready contractors. How will we ensure the needed resources are in place to build capacity and readiness?

Johnson: We've been partnering with several agencies, including APEX and federal agencies. We've conducted training sessions, especially on federal requirements, at the request of small businesses.

We'll continue to identify and provide the necessary resources. We're also open to partnering with others, including the DOTs, and would be happy to collaborate with the cities of Portland and Vancouver to tap into the resources and training they offer.

Singleton: I wanted to add that during our asset mapping with the program partners, several people mentioned existing programs they'd like to connect with our team. So that collaboration is already in progress.

Bell: A challenge we face is the limited number of DBEs due to the difficult certification process. Our equity team is working with firms certified in Washington or Oregon to explore DBE certification opportunities, particularly given the decade of construction ahead. We're proactively helping firms navigate certification and remove barriers while collaborating with groups like OAME and PBDG to address industry challenges.

City of Vancouver Staff: Is there somewhere this is summarized and documented—everything that's been done to date, including all the things you just mentioned?

Bell: I'm sure we could pull something together. It's widespread, and we have a team constantly working on outreach, but we can compile it.

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City of Vancouver Staff: I think that would be helpful. It would give us a sense of what's been done so far and what's moving forward. If there are additional resources on any side, we can collaborate.

Bell: The key is going to be leveraging existing resources. One challenge we face is that there are so many resources available that people can get lost. We've been working on creating a repository of all these resources, which you can find on the IBR program's website, specifically on the [DBE webpage](#). We're also focused on intentionally removing hurdles as part of this effort.

CBAG Member: We have a lot going on already, but under the workforce equity piece, we have 44 items, with seven under childcare, six under apprenticeships, and various others in other categories. Could we group these together? For example, all childcare-related items in one place. Are they the same, just with different wording, or is there a gap? This would help us see if we're truly covering everything under childcare.

Singleton: That's the next stage of your work. This is your last brainstorming session, so when we come back, we'll focus on reviewing and refining everything.

City of Portland Staff: In those outreach conversations with different organizations, we'd be happy to join. We recognize it can be overwhelming with various entities doing different things and offering different programs. If it would be helpful to have a City of Portland staff representative involved to explain what we have going on or where we could be supportive, we'd be glad to assist.

Johnson: We'd love to have you join us, along with anyone else interested in these monthly conversations. We'll make sure to reach out and get the appropriate person an invite to sit in with us. This is going to be a team effort, with all partners bringing resources and expertise to the table.

## PRESENTATION ON EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL COMMUNITY BENEFITS IN THE WORKFORCE EQUITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY CATEGORY

Thomas-Peralta presented examples of potential community benefits in the Workforce Equity and Economic Opportunity. She confirmed that these examples are just some of potential community benefits that CBAG members brainstormed during the March meeting.

Examples include:

- DBEs & Small Businesses
  - Ensure that minority contractors, particularly Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) firms and Washington State's Office of Minority and Women Business Enterprises (OMWBE) certified firms, have opportunities for competitive bids and in bridge construction.
  - Provide opportunities for supporting small business development.
- Workforce Outreach and Training

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- Prioritize creating childcare centers to support the workforce.
- Address housing needs of workforce (this is included in the "community benefits" category).
- Develop collaborative training and apprenticeship programs with colleges and high schools to improve graduation rates and enhance workforce readiness.
- Labor and Workforce Provisions
  - Develop rapid in-house procedures for complaint resolution, considering labor unions' involvement, to swiftly address grievance and avoid extended Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) processing times.
  - Establish platforms like periodic surveys or dedicated websites for employees to report issues, empowering them and encouraging business owners to sustain equitable environments by providing transparency and accountability.

Thomas-Peralta provided a quick reminder before moving into the discussion by noting that this category is different from others and will not move into the review and refine stage. Instead, these recommendations fall under the purview of teams like the Workforce Equity Team, DBE Team, and those handling potential labor agreements. The recommendations will inform the work of these groups, and the Community Benefits tracker includes notes in the status column about which teams are responsible for each recommendation. Acknowledging the group's eagerness to discuss workforce issues, Thomas-Peralta emphasized that this session was brought back for further discussion. She then turned the floor over to the large group for the brainstorming session.

Bell noted that the program commissioned [the Workforce Market Study Report](#) with Worksystems, Inc., Workforce Southwest Washington, and Columbia-Willamette Regional Workforce Collaborative. The current approach builds on recommendations from that study and input from this group. He then opened the floor for discussion, asking for feedback on whether the program is on the right track, what might need adjustment, and how to leverage partners to avoid duplicating efforts.

## LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Members discussed simplifying language in the workforce equity list, noting redundancy between items and agreeing to remove the term "high-paid trades" to avoid confusion. The importance of explicitly including high schools in outreach efforts was emphasized.

The group also highlighted the need to support local firms while navigating federal regulations, and the importance of effective apprenticeship programs that lead to long-term career opportunities. Additionally, members suggested repurposing construction sites for other industrial employment opportunities post-construction and stressed the need for diverse representation of staff on property acquisition and right-of-way teams.



## Questions and comments from CBAG Members:

CBAG Member: This is a clarifying question: To count in the statistics we're measuring to see if we're meeting these goals, must a business be certified as a DBE?

Bell: For DBE participation to count, businesses must be DBE certified. As this is a federally funded program, we are required to set DBE goals for each package. While the primary focus will be on DBE certification, we will also track other metrics, like women-owned and emerging small businesses. However, DBE certification is essential for meeting the set goals.

CBAG Member: Then it seems the first step should be getting businesses certified, since that's the gateway to participation.

Johnson: We know some minority- and women-owned firms have grown beyond the DBE program, like Raimore Construction, a large African American-owned firm. We'll be encouraging these firms to participate because they bring both diversity and a diverse workforce. So, even if they're not DBEs, we'll still be reaching out to women- and minority-owned firms to ensure they participate in this program.

City of Portland Staff: I think that would be a great way to bring them into the program—through the Small Business Administration Mentor-Protégé Program, which pairs larger companies with smaller firms under their contract. There are often incentives in Request for Proposals (RFPs) for this type of work. Raimore, for example, would make an excellent mentor for some of these smaller firms.

CBAG Member: This document is messy but fine as a collection of ideas. While sorting is needed, Shannon mentioned that teams are handling this behind the scenes. The question is whether we should focus on well-covered areas like training and apprenticeships or dig into overlooked issues like childcare, housing, and workforce transportation. We need to ensure everything is clearly documented, especially as leadership changes over time.

Singleton: It's up to this group. This will be our last discussion on this topic before CBAG digs into the details in other categories for specific recommendations. CBAG has time to address both well-covered areas, ensuring they're documented, and less common issues like housing. CBAG members can decide how they want to use their time today.

CBAG Member: We could make a general statement like, "We assume or expect best practices to include X, Y, Z," and then move on.

CBAG Member: I met a Career and Technical Education teacher from Hudson's Bay High School whose students are ideal for the bridge project, but he was unfamiliar with IBR. He shared that a skilled student struggled to enter the electrician's union, highlighting the difficulty of accessing trades. With more focus on college than trades, we need to ensure schools are informed. I connected him with our IBR outreach team, who will speak to his classes this year.



Singleton: We're also working to connect with programs and agencies serving youth experiencing homelessness, ensuring we're opening opportunities for those who may be disengaged from school.

CBAG Member: As (CBAG member) mentioned, becoming a DBE takes time. We had a similar issue with COBID firms—certification took three months, but the bid window was 90 days. Can we leverage Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) and Minority and Women Owned Business (MWOB) firms to help them become DBEs?

Bell: Many firms aren't DBE certified but may be Minority- or Women-owned. Recent reforms under the Biden-Harris Administration have made it easier for DBE certification across states. We're monitoring this and working with both states to help Minority and Women owned firms overcome barriers to DBE certification.

CBAG Member: Do we need to include anything here to support that effort?

Bell: Any statement or reinforcement of that effort would be helpful.

CBAG Member: DBE firms are crucial, but so are BIPOC employees in non-DBE firms. How do we balance supporting DBE firms without neglecting minority employees in non-DBE firms? Have you thought about how to address this?

Johnson: This program's size and duration will require all hands-on deck. There will be opportunities for both businesses and the workforce, given the current gap in employees. The program conducted a workforce study to address this and is confident there will be room for everyone.

Bell: We can operationalize this through contract specifications, setting apprentice goals and targets for hiring women, people of color, and persons with disabilities. Tracking and reporting these metrics will help address high unemployment rates in disability communities. Introducing more DBE firms, like Raimore Construction with a diverse workforce, is key to diversifying the workforce.

CBAG member: The outreach and goal setting for firms is commendable. Is there a visual representation of contracted firms and employed people of color on the website or for public access? Is that being considered?

Bell: The IBR webpage has a dashboard showing the number of DBE firms and their demographics under the WSP contract. We'll expand this as we move into construction, using contract specifications to guide the workforce data collection to develop visual representation/dashboards to report and track DBE participation and workforce demographics. Regionally, examples like the Abernathy Bridge dashboard show how we can display hiring by zip code. This program is a great opportunity to use similar tools for transparency and accountability over the next 10 years.

CBAG member: I recall a discussion about training ex-offenders or incarcerated juveniles through the Oregon Youth Authority. This could be something to consider for future discussions.

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Hall-Ruiz: We have a plan, with the second phase focusing on youth. While we've been working with reentry programs for formerly incarcerated individuals, youth will be a focus in the next phase. We also collaborate with the Joint Agency Task Force (JATF) to align efforts across agencies and reduce barriers for equity priority groups.

Bell: It'd be helpful for members to receive the list of folks the program has on the outreach list.

## CLOSING REMARKS

Bell transitioned to the next segment, informing members about upcoming CBAG and program meetings.

Johnson commended the members for their hard work and dedication to community benefits.

## ATTENDEES

Attendees	Organization
<b>CBAG Members</b>	
Greg Johnson	IBR
Ray Mabey	Oregon State Department of Transportation
Priya Dhanapal	City of Portland
Anne McEnery-Ogle	City of Vancouver
Marcus Mundy	Coalition of Communities of Color
Scott McCallum	Washington School for the Blind
Peter Fels	Alliance for Community Engagement
Thomas Hickey	Community Advisory Group (CAG) Representative
Vicki Nakashima	Equity Advisory Group (EAG) Representative
Walter Valenta	At-large Community Member
Holly Williams	At-large Community Member
Michael Strahs	Kimco Realty
Corky Collier	Columbia Corridor Association
Carley Francis	Washington State Department of Transportation
Ben Jacobsen	Jane's Forum

Attendees	Organization
<b>IBR Staff</b>	
Johnell Bell	Principal Equity Officer
Shannon Singleton	Community Benefits Lead
Emilee Thomas-Peralta	Equity Team
Eric Trinh	Equity Team

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Monika Johnson	Equity Team
Brenda Siragusa	Equity Team
Steve Katko	Design Lead
Yemaya Hall-Ruiz	Workforce Equity Lead
Fabián Hidalgo Guerrero	Community Engagement Team
Amanda Hart	Technical Support

## Additional Participants

Online viewing is open to the public, partner agency staff, and IBR team members. Six participants viewed the meeting via the YouTube livestream during the meeting.

## MEETING RECORDING AND MATERIALS

### Meeting Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJFaC2PZuog>

### Meeting Materials

The meeting materials are available here: [CBAG Meeting August 22, 2024 | Interstate Bridge Replacement Program](#)