

District exceeds business goals

Written by
Friday, 18 March 2011 14:24



The Minneapolis Public Schools Minority, Women and Diverse Business Participation Oversight Committee (MWDB-POC) on March 10 announced the participation of women and diverse business partners for the new MPS Educational Service Center (ESC) surpassed the 25 percent goal by 20 percent, raising participation to nearly half of all business partners.

Minority and Women Business Enterprises (MWBE) proposal evaluations and contract awards are ongoing. Currently, minority- and women-owned businesses account for 45 percent of business partners and approximately \$7.1 million of the \$15.8 million dollars procured. Minority workers account for 45 percent of the workforce, surpassing the goal by 20 percent; women workers account for five percent of the workforce, achieving the contract goal.

“We are extremely pleased to meet and surpass the participation goals of diverse businesses and workers in the development of the Educational Service Center on West Broadway in north Minneapolis,” said James Burroughs, director of the MPS Office of Equity and Diversity. “Our hope is that this project will serve as a catalyst for economic growth and stability for the community in our new neighborhood.”

Mortenson/Legacy and Thor, the development and construction firms for the new ESC, are proven leaders in the field of workforce diversity with experience in engaging community organizations and minority- and women-owned business associations in order to increase opportunities. Mortenson provides monthly reports to MPS on the performance of a community participation program in maximizing the use of WMBEs and employing women and minority workers in the construction of the ESC.

The Minneapolis Board of Education in October 2010 established the MWDB-POC for the construction of the new ESC as part of a policy implemented in fall 2010 to promote businesses owned and operated by minorities, women and diverse communities in school district procurement and contracts for goods and services. The policy is a proactive effort of MPS to partner with and foster economic development in Minneapolis.

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The committee is composed of five voting members and two Minneapolis school board members. Committee members include Velma Korbel, Director, City of Minneapolis, Civil Rights Department; Luz Maria Frias, Director, City of St. Paul, Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity Department; Craig Taylor, Director, Office of Business and Community Economic Development, University of Minnesota; Ron Hick, designee of the Office of Councilmember Don Samuels; and Bishop Richard D. Howell, Jr., Shiloh Temple International Ministries. Board of Education members Alberto Monserrate and Rebecca Gagnon are non-voting members of the committee.

The MWDB-POC provides external review to ensure that project goals for minority women and diverse business participation are met during the construction of the ESC. The committee will meet four times per year until the project is completed. The committee's next meeting is scheduled for June 2011.