

Exclusive Interview with Courtney Edmonds Director  
Office of Supplier Diversity & Inclusion  
WSSC Water



1. Tell us about your role with WSSC Water and how you prepared for this assignment?

As the Director for WSSC Water's Office of Supplier Diversity & Inclusion, I have the honor of working with a dedicated team to advance opportunities for diverse and small businesses in WSSC Water's contracting. With the support of our Commissioners and leadership from our General Manager/CEO Carla A. Reid, our office works to increase access to opportunities, specifically for diverse and small businesses. My experience in Supplier Diversity, contract compliance and diversity & inclusion prepared me for this assignment, prior to joining WSSC Water.

2. What does your department encumber and how does it touch the supply chain? Do you set spending goals on projects?

WSSC Water procures a wide range of products and services, including office supplies; IT products and services; financial and accounting services; professional consulting services; architectural and engineering; and construction services to name a few. The Office of Supplier Diversity & Inclusion administers a contract specific goal-setting process for all competitive procurements greater than \$100,000.00. Our team reviews the scope of work and associated contract value to apply specific goals for the solicitation.

3. How has the worldwide pandemic COVID-19 affected the delivery of services to your rate payers?

Water is essential – especially now during this pandemic. Consequently, WSSC Water's staff have been deemed as essential personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic. We've made changes to our shifts and protocols to adhere to Centers for Disease Control guidance, but our H<sub>2</sub>O Heroes have continued to work tirelessly to provide safe, clean, reliable water to our customers in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties.

4. It has come to my attention that a new Economic Disparity Study has been commissioned by WSSC Water. What is it about, why is the study so important, how often is it commissioned and what will you be looking for with the conclusion results?

WSSC Water's Disparity Study is a key component in the administration of our Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program. The Disparity Study will examine our spend with minority- and women-owned businesses throughout the study period and determine if disparities exist, and to what extent.

The study will analyze the utilization and availability of firms in the marketplace and collect anecdotal data from business owners and professional organizations. Businesses can provide feedback by emailing [DisparityStudy@wsscwater.com](mailto:DisparityStudy@wsscwater.com).

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WSSC Water hires a consultant to conduct a Disparity Study every five years. These results provide key insight and will determine potential adjustments to the administration of our MBE Program. The Study is scheduled for completion in July 2021.

5. How can one get registered with WSSC Water to do business with you?

Firms interested in doing business with WSSC Water can register in our Supplier Portal by visiting [www.wsscwater.com/supplier](http://www.wsscwater.com/supplier).

6. Please explain the various modes of Local and minority business enterprise programs at WSSC Water and how does one know which one is best suited for?

Businesses located in Prince George's or Montgomery counties are encouraged to apply to WSSC Water's Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE) Program. Additionally, firms with at least 25% of their workforce residing in either Prince George's or Montgomery Counties may be eligible for the program.

WSSC Water recognizes MBE/DBE certification from the following agencies: Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), Prince George's County Supplier Development & Diversity Division, DC's Department of Small & Local Business Development, the Capital Region Minority Supplier Development Council (CRMSDC) and the Women Presidents' Educational Organization (WPEO).

7. Can you name some of the projects that are coming out in 2021 for MBE firms to prepare for?

There are several exciting opportunities for MBE firms planned in 2021. Some of our larger planned solicitations include: Street Repair and Paving services; the Advanced Metering Infrastructure project; a Sewer Main Rehabilitation Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity contract; and a General Engineering Design Services Basic Ordering Agreement contract.

8. How has the social movement of Black Lives Matter touched WSSC Water?

The Black Lives Matter movement reaffirms the important work that happens in our Supplier Diversity office. Identifying and addressing disparities that exist in our contracting practices, increasing access to contracting opportunities and decision makers, and providing business development services is necessary and critical for WSSC Water.

