

# Social Equity Executive Roundtable

July 28, 2021

Meeting Summary

## MODERATOR

**Beth Ruffin**, CEO, The Everyday Inclusionist

## PARTICIPANTS

- Emily Bowers, Director, State & Local Engagement, Green Building Initiative
- Weby Bowles, Project Manager, New Buildings Institute
- Charlie Carter, President, American Institute of Steel Construction
- Henry Chamberlain, President & COO, Building Owners & Managers Association
- Amy Cortese, Director of Programs, New Buildings Institute
- Chuck Curlin, Senior Vice President & Partner, Shultz Engineering Group & NIBS Board Director
- Soph Davenberry, Chief Technology Officer, National Energy Management Institute Committee
- Mark Dorsey, Chief Executive Officer, Construction Specifications Institute
- Anne M. Ellis, Executive Director, Charles Pankow Foundation & NIBS Board Director
- Julie Garbini, Executive Director, RMC Research & Education Foundation
- K C Gauldine, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Living Future Institute
- Jenna Hamilton, Vice President of National Affairs, Green Building Initiative
- Carl Hedde, Head of Insurance Practice, One Concern & NIBS Board Chair
- Zoe Hughes, Chief Executive Officer, NAREIM
- Eileen Jensen, Board Director, ASHRAE
- Nicole Maher, Chief Operating Officer, National Ready Mixed Concrete Association
- Katharine E. Morgan, President, ASTM International
- Britton Rife, Project Manager, NW Energy Efficiency Council & Smart Buildings Center
- Donté P. Shannon, Chief Executive Officer, Association for Equipment Management Professionals
- Steve Sill, Board Director, ASHRAE
- Thomas Smith, Executive Director, American Society of Civil Engineers
- Adrienne Thomle, Board Director, ASHRAE
- Lakisha Woods, President & Chief Executive Officer, National Institute of Building Sciences
- Vicki Worden, President & Chief Executive Officer, Green Building Initiative
- Renée Yancey, Senior VP, External Workforce and EDI Strategies, The American Institute of Architects
- Bill Yanek, Chief Executive Officer, ConnexFM

# Improving the Workforce of the Built Environment Through Social Equity Roundtable

## July 28, 2021 | Meeting Summary

### OVERVIEW

The National Institute of Building Sciences convened an executive Social Equity Roundtable on July 28, 2021. This was a follow up to the December 2020 executive roundtable entitled “Improving the Workforce of the Built Environment Through Social Equity,” where built environment executives discussed the workforce shortage, industry sustainability, increased market share, higher return on investment, review of internal and external data, review of internal and external best practices, culture (inclusion), diversity, recruiting and retention, and strategic partnerships. The December roundtable convened CEOs and officers from 35 organizations representing the built environment.

### AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY AND BEST PRACTICES

There are many areas of opportunity, including the outline of a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policy, metrics and reporting, public materials, member demographics, member engagement, and accessible materials.

Best practices include:

- Identifying DEI leadership (board, committee, task group, C-suite, operations manager, etc.)
- Listing potential board of directors nominees who expand diversity, depth and representation
- DEI staff training
- Diversity Fellows programs (racial and gender diversity)
- DEI integration through strategic plan, board of directors composition, staffing, programs and partnerships
- Internal DEI resources for staff and members
- Strategic partnerships
- DEI events (summits, panel discussions, trainings and conferences)
- Updated code of ethics to include DEI focus
- Strategic goals and benchmarks for volunteer leaders
- Research and resources for external partners
- Adding DEI to every committee meeting
- Reducing language barriers

### NIBS AND THE AVENUE M SOCIAL EQUITY SURVEY

A takeaway from the December 2020 meeting was that the

industry needed to better understand the demographic information and thoughts from current employees about the culture of the industry. NIBS partnered with Avenue M Group (Avenue M), an independent market research and consulting firm, to conduct a comprehensive research study aimed at collecting critical data on the workforce of the built environment for the purpose of informing future initiatives on social equity. The results were released in May.

Most respondents (65%) indicated it is important or extremely important to increase the diversity of the built environment. Other highlights: 43% of employed respondents indicated their company has a program or initiative dedicated to DEI; 28% of respondents indicated they have experienced discrimination or prejudice based on age; and 66% of respondents indicated they have experienced discrimination or prejudice based on gender (women).

Respondents also indicated experienced discrimination or prejudice based on race/ethnicity:

- 72% of Black or African American respondents
- 48% of East Asian respondents
- 48% of South Asian respondents
- 48% of South Asian respondents
- 41% of Hispanic or Latinx respondents
- 43% of Native American, Alaskan Native, or First Nations respondents
- 41% of Hispanic or Latinx respondents
- 38% of East Asian respondents
- 35% of Middle Eastern or North African respondents

People of color and women stated they have to work harder than others to be valued in the build environment. People of color and women also do not believe they equitable opportunities to advance their careers.

### GROUP COMMITMENTS TO SOCIAL EQUITY

The purpose of the July roundtable was to discuss the results of the survey, next steps and group commitments toward improving DEI in the building environment.

Recommended actions include signing the PWC CEO Action Pledge, joining 2,000 other CEOs who have signed this pledge.

According to CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion, the pledge “aims to rally the business community to advance diversity

# Improving the Workforce of the Built Environment Through Social Equity Roundtable

## July 28, 2021 | Meeting Summary

and inclusion within the workplace. The CEO pledge outlines a specific set of actions the signatory CEOs will take to cultivate a trusting environment where all ideas are welcomed, and employees feel comfortable and empowered to have discussions about diversity and inclusion.”

NIBS CEO Lakisha A. Woods, CAE, said there have been some conversations about this at an individual level. She mentioned that we need to make sure we’re not duplicating activities that already exist.

“We must work together as an industry to focus on steps that will impact real change,” Woods said. “Committing to take specific action as it relates to developing a diverse leadership pipeline is the key to future success.”

### The CEO Action Pledge:

- Cultivate trusting workplaces that can have complex, and sometimes difficult, conversations.
- Implement and/or expand unconscious bias education.
- Share best—and unsuccessful—practices.
- Create and share strategic inclusion and diversity plans with board of directors (or equivalent governing bodies).

Visiting CEOAction.org does not require organizations or companies to commit to a specific timeline. Organizations can go at the pace that is right for them.

Other recommended actions toward building social equity:

- **Commit to building a diverse leadership team:** Make a commitment to diversify your leadership team through succession planning.
- **Promote to your members:** Promote the importance of this work to your members so they can implement change within their own firms.

Henry Chamberlain, President & COO of the Building Owners & Managers Association, said this starts with a grassroots approach. With BOMA, members participate in a leadership academy, where folks are moving up to the executive committee and other leadership posts. These members are being paired with veterans in the industry.

Mark Dorsey, CEO of the Construction Specifications Institute, said his organization is inching toward building a more diverse leadership team. The events of last summer triggered the desire for the board to make quicker changes, he said. The “board went from 0 to making changes that will affect the selection process this coming December.” While

this is occurring at the national level, it is trickling down to the regional and local levels.

Dorsey mentioned that CSI conducted a study with 45 for-profit and non-profit organizations to align best practices, conducting executive interviews. The organization found a commonality: DEI is the right thing to do and organizations must lead with an economic imperative.

## NIBS COMMITMENTS AND NEXT STEPS

The National Institute of Building Sciences will serve as a convener for the industry, since that is what Congress created us to do. Woods mentioned that NIBS manages the Whole Building Design Guide, the largest repository of building information, which is always looking to add new information, bringing together those who already have come down this path and who have success stories, tools/checklists. Ideally, NIBS would like to build a similar content repository for DEI content for the building industry on nibs.org.

Next steps include sending an email to the participants of the roundtable and posting a collection of best practices thus far. In addition, NIBS will send out a press release to inform other organizations of this broad industry commitment and ask them to join in.

The goal: To have all building industry organizations commit to the CEO Action Pledge and the three other recommended steps by the end of September. Once we have the list of associations that will commit to the pledge, we will share the results of those who have signed on with CEO Update and other social and news outlets.

We should always celebrate when we see the needle move, and this is a first step in the right direction!

## INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THE NEXT ROUNDTABLE?

Contact Jennifer Hitzke at [jhitzke@nibs.org](mailto:jhitzke@nibs.org) or visit [nibs.org/DEI](https://nibs.org/DEI) for more information.