



Media Contact: Pat St. Claire
Executive Director of Communications
404.802.2855
Pat.Stclaire@atlanta.k12.ga.us

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APS ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF DISPARITY STUDY

Study commissioned by district to review minority and women participation in past SPLOST related contracts

ATLANTA – Atlanta Public Schools released today the results of its comprehensive, independently conducted disparity study, commissioned by the district in order to analyze APS' history in awarding contracts to minority- and women-owned firms. The year-long study specifically looked at competition for construction and professional services contracts. During extensive community input as part of the 2017 SPLOST referendum process, some concerns were raised regarding past low levels of minority participation in construction and professional services contracts in relation to the diversity of the local business market.

"In response to concerns raised by the community and in the spirit of upholding Atlanta's rich history of inclusion, the Atlanta Board of Education made a commitment to review our procurement practices to increase women and minority participation," Chairman Courtney English said. "The Board and our administration take this issue seriously, and we will begin implementing a comprehensive response to these findings in the weeks and months ahead."

At the request of the district Keen Independent Research LLC, a nationally recognized independent research firm that specializes in disparity studies, analyzed Atlanta Public Schools contract data from 2011 to 2016 using a combination of interviews, focus groups and supporting data to examine the existing contracting policies, practices and programs. Based on feedback from vendors, trade associations and the detailed data review, the firm determined that the percentage of contract dollars going to Minority/Women Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) was lower than expected based on availability analysis, thus identifying that disparities exist.

"The Atlanta Metro Area is home to a vibrant and diverse community. Therefore our procurement process should reflect the diversity of the community, which is why a renewed commitment to the inclusion of minority- and women-owned enterprises is

imperative,” said Superintendent Meria Carstarphen. “Given past disparities, this study shows that the district has a lot of work to do to enable equal access to contracting opportunities. We plan to implement the necessary policies and practices, including a vendor outreach program, to increase the diversity among our district vendors and to set the expectation that all solicitations encourage the participation of M/WBEs.”

Disparity studies evaluate contracting data to measure the participation and utilization of available small, minority and women-owned business enterprises within public entities. Disparities exist when these firms are found to be underutilized in comparison to the proportion of available and capable firms in the local marketplace.

Keen outlined a number of potential actions for the district to consider. These include APS informing the business community of the district’s commitment to inclusion as well as re-examining the current methods for procuring construction, Architect and Engineer (A&E) and Information Technology (IT) contracts.

Based on the suggested actions, the district’s administration identified a series of next steps for the board to consider to improve inclusive practices. One of recommendations includes designing and implementing a system for monitoring Minority/Women Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) participation in contracting and reporting to the Board on an annual basis. In addition, a vendor outreach program will be developed to build awareness with M/WBE firms regarding solicitation opportunities as well as to inform firms about how to do business with Atlanta Public Schools. The district also plans to revise language in all formal solicitation documents to encourage inclusion of M/WBEs in submissions. Furthermore, the district also plans to design and implement a system to review disparities in non-competitive procurement methods.

On Monday, October 9, the disparity study along with the recommendations outlined will be shared with the community at the upcoming Board of Education at 2:30pm at the Center for Learning and Leadership, 130 Trinity Avenue. At the meeting, the Atlanta Board of Education will consider the adoption of a resolution affirming the commitment to uphold the inclusive practices in the district’s competitive solicitation process.

All information regarding the disparity study, will be posted on the APS procurement website. For more information regarding the APS procurement process, visit <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/page/220>

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About Atlanta Public Schools

Atlanta Public Schools is one of the largest school districts in the state of Georgia, serving approximately 52,000 students across 88 schools. The district is organized into nine K-12 clusters with 67 traditional schools, 17 charter schools, two citywide single-gender academies and two alternative programs. For

more information, visit www.atlantapublicschools.us , follow us on  at <https://www.facebook.com/AtlantaPublicSchools/> and @apsupdate on  and 