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It does not count as 1 of the 4 page totals for the submission.

Outstanding Award Application

Chapter Name:	Virginia Association of Governmental Procurement
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List Program(s) that will be highlighted in application	Outstanding Chapter Advocacy and Outreach Award: 2022 Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee

☐ Yes Has your chapter submitted your Performance Standard SEAL?

Check the box for the Outstanding Chapter Award you are submitting:

- ☐ Outstanding Chapter Operations Award
- How does your chapter excel in its operating processes, including policies and procedures, budgeting, recognition of agencies and individuals and involvement with NIGP?
- ☐ Outstanding Chapter Membership Award
- How well does your chapter market membership benefits and resources and what are your methods for membership retention and growth?
- ☐ Outstanding Chapter Advocacy and Outreach Award
- What practices and operations has your chapter demonstrated to be an effective advocate for members and our profession?
- ☐ Outstanding Chapter Professional Development Award
- How does your chapter go above and beyond providing educational resources and other opportunities to your membership?

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTAL PROCUREMENT'S DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION PROGRAM AND COMMITTEE OVERHAUL

1. Explain the program/event/best practice WORTH 25 POINTS - (Choose one or 2 programs; explain the program in detail, how it runs/works)

For many years the Virginia Association of Governmental Procurement (VAGP) Diversity Committee effort's focused on helping small, minority, woman, and veteran owned suppliers to lower barriers of entry in doing business with Virginia public entities. More recently, the Commonwealth of Virginia has made great strides at the State level to overhaul their procurement practices to be more inclusive of micro, small, minority, woman, and veteran owned businesses. Significant dollars, training, certification, and other efforts have been made to help align micro, small, minority, woman, and veteran owned businesses with opportunities to sell to the Commonwealth of Virginia. The exciting efforts at the State level outpaced what VAGP was able to do in a significant or impactful way. As such, a group of VAGP volunteers came together and discussed other potential opportunities where the Diversity Committee could have an impact. The first major change was made in 2021 when the Diversity Committee changed its name to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. Once the DEI Committee was established, the VAGP Board worked closely with the Committee to put VAGP's DEI efforts front and center.

VAGP's 2022 – 2024 Strategic Plan established several new initiatives for 2022. During our Strategic Planning weekend, the Board updated VAGP's Vision, Mission, and Values, which started January 1, 2022. We also updated our Strategic Road Map through a series of goals we have begun and will achieve in each year (2022 - 2024). One of the goals for 2022 was to overhaul our DEI Committee. As President, Elizabeth Dooley assigned each voting Board Member to a committee for which they would be the champion at the voting Board level. VAGP's 2022 Past President, Cindy Smith, was assigned to the DEI Committee. In addition, VAGP's 2022 President, Beth Dooley, also served on the DEI Committee. The VAGP Board and Membership also approved a budget of \$4,500.00 towards our DEI efforts. Previous years we had budgeted \$1,000 or less, so this was a significant increase towards DEI efforts.

Discussions were underway at the end of 2021 on how to have meaningful impacts on DEI efforts within VAGP and keep everyone engaged. VAGP experienced a small setback with our DEI efforts in 2021. We had to regroup, making this subject approachable and inclusive for all members. We wanted all VAGP members to be included in the conversation and didn't want anyone to feel as if they were being excluded. As such, the DEI Committee recommended changing the committees' focus to supporting and elevating our members, rather than Virginia Businesses, through Professional Development (ProD) training opportunities, DEI specific quarterly virtual trainings, conference scholarships, and individual recognitions each month. Before we could roll out this new plan, we needed to consider the diversity VAGP represented. With over 1,300 members, VAGP represents people from many different backgrounds and experiences. Those backgrounds and experiences add value and contribute in many meaningful ways to making VAGP and procurement in Virginia strong and well-rounded.

2. Share Outcomes and Results WORTH 25 POINTS – (Share pre and post results: what you started with, where it ended, was it successful, how was it received, did it have an impact?)

The new DEI Committee Program was well received by VAGP members, and we are continuing to build on this framework in 2023.

In Q1 of 2022, VAGP Board hired DEI Consultant, Arielle Levy, for the following 2022 program efforts: DEI TEAM STRATEGY AND VISION CONSULTING – virtual consulting with the DEI Committee to confirm the full year program.

EMPLOYEE LUNCH & LEARN SERIES ON DEI – virtual quarterly lunch and learns for all VAGP Members.
SPRING CONFERENCE ENGAGEMENT – opportunity for Ms. Levy to present to the VAGP membership on DEI topic.

VAGP spent \$3,675 for Ms. Levy's services. The planning sessions were very helpful in explaining our past experiences and how we could avoid making the same mistakes in the future. We also strategized about how to rollout the program through quarterly lunch and learns so the sessions would build over time.

VAGP's DEI Committee also created an annual calendar of diversity recognitions for each month. The DEI Committee conducted seven interviews with VAGP members to cover many months of specific heritages. We learned much about members we've known for years, but until then, never knowing some of their meaningful experiences. It was inspiring to read and share on social media! We recognized the following VAGP Members:

- February 2022 – Black History Month – Dr. Sharon T. Lewis
- March 2022 – Woman's History Month – Ms. Heather Hall
- April 2022 – National Arab American Heritage Month – Ms. Samira Mkaimel
- May 2022 – Asian Pacific American Heritage Month – Mr. Jianchong Luo
- September 2022 – Hispanic Heritage Month – Ms. Keishla Perez
- October 2022 – Filipino Americans Heritage Month – Mr. Angelo Franco
- October 2022 - Polish American Heritage Month – Mr. Jay Smigielski

Finally, VAGP's DEI Committee worked on providing newly created scholarships for free conference attendance. To earn the scholarship, VAGP Members had to submit an essay on what DEI meant to them. We had several submittals for each offering and the DEI Committee reviewed and selected the winner.

3. Explain what makes your program/event/best practice unique or innovative WORTH 25 POINTS (Explain why this was innovative or new for your chapter, how you came up with the idea, how it shows uniqueness to your chapter or innovative to others)

There is quite a bit of talk and discussion on DEI, but rarely do we see much action. VAGP decided we needed to correct this and took appropriate action. This was innovative for VAGP because we rarely tackle issues outside of Procurement specific topics. However, we realized that DEI also greatly impacts our day-to-day roles in Procurement and is a topic we must continue to learn and discuss openly. We made our DEI Program unique by not taking a traditional Board approach to DEI. We wanted **ALL** VAGP members included on the DEI journey so that everyone had an opportunity to participate and share their opinions.

4. Lessons learned (so that others can adapt or replicate) WORTH 25 POINTS (Talk us through the process of what you learned about the program, what worked what didn't, how would you do it differently, will you continue to do it?)

We learned a great deal from our new approach to the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Program. Starting early is a **MUST**. We recommend the following steps, but they can be adapted to meet a specific chapter's needs:

- 1.) Get to work early! Find a great group of volunteers who are interested in serving and reaching out to members and working to learn about the membership and celebrate their backgrounds and histories.

- 2.) Ask volunteers to develop an appropriate committee name and charter. Once the charter is created, establish goals that the committee would like them to meet in years one, two or three. DEI programs tend to experience stops and starts. As I mentioned earlier, VAGP had a setback in 2021, so we learned from the setback, regrouped, and then set new parameters to try and overcome our setback. Setbacks aren't a big deal so long as you try; you won't know till you make a start.
- 3.) Find and meet with a DEI consultant or someone within your membership who works in a DEI position or has the necessary education and background to support your initiatives. Make sure the consultant(s) understand your parameters, and how the chapter wants DEI initiatives communicated and rolled out to your membership. Setup your DEI education schedule with the consultant(s) and identify appropriate topics, dates, times. Once these are established, the events should be communicated to membership early and often.
- 4.) Create a calendar of heritage events each month. Once you have your calendar, share it with your members and explain that you will be recognizing members who have X background in Y month and ask them to participate. In addition, share with the members a list of questions you plan to ask. VAGP asks our members the following questions through an interview:
 - a. Your Name and Certifications, if any.
 - b. VAGP Committees/Board you serve on.
 - c. How got involved with VAGP?
 - d. Current Employer/Position?
 - e. How did you get involved in Public Procurement?
 - f. Where did you start in Public Procurement/Employer(s)?
 - g. Who motivates/motivated you to pursue a career in Public Procurement?
 - h. What does DEI and/or Diversity mean to you?
 - i. How could VAGP continue to diversify Public Procurement?
 - j. What would you like VAGP members to know/remember about you? (Quote)
 - k. Anything else you feel would be interesting...?
- 5.) Lastly, establishing a scholarship or other program to help elevate members who need additional training and/or support. VAGP created DEI Specific Scholarships for our conferences. We asked our members to write an essay: "What DEI Means to Me". The topic changes for each essay. I would recommend chapters picking a topic and be willing to post the essays for your members to read. We plan to do more in the future, and this was only a starting point for us.

VAGP has continued this approach in 2023. It has proven again to be a very successful approach, and we are building the DEI Committee's reach in 2023 and 2024.



Each year we observe Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of individuals who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Spanish-speaking nations of the Caribbean. This year's theme of Hispanic Heritage month is **UNIDOS: Inclusivity for a Stronger Nation!**

Hispanics are the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S. They play a significant role in our economy. In Virginia, Hispanics make up 10.5% of the state's population and in some cities already comprise about 40% of the residents.

During this month we recognize the many accomplishments and contributions that the Hispanic/Latino/Latinx American community has made throughout history.

Our diversity is our strength, and the contributions of Hispanic individuals to the culture, the economy, and the future of our nation cannot be denied. Let's celebrate each other!

Meet Keishla Perez, MPA, CPPB, NIGP-CPP, VCO

Meet Keishla



Keishla is a Capital Procurement Officer with Prince William County Government and a proud member of PWC Organization for Latino Employees (OLE).

"I can thank Dr. Stephen Gordon for introducing me to the world of procurement and the many opportunities available within this field while I was in graduate school obtaining my MPA. I fell in love with the variety and complexity of the projects as well as the huge impact that this profession has on the community. One of my favorite things about this

profession is that procurement is one of a few departments within government that works with every department/agency, which makes every day different and exciting."

"As a Hispanic American whose culture has greatly shaped me, I am extremely proud that the Virginia Association of Governmental Procurement recognizes Hispanic Heritage month."