

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY COMMITTEES (AOCs)

The Biden-Harris administration has committed to [advancing equity through the whole of government](#), including through major federal investments such as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act. Project owners, contractors, unions, community groups, and other stakeholders can all support these priorities by taking proactive steps to promote equal opportunity such as by establishing Access and Opportunity Committees (AOCs).

AOCs are multi-stakeholder groups that regularly meet to monitor and support compliance with diversity and equity goals on a specific construction project or in a workplace. AOCs are often established by [Project Labor Agreements \(PLAs\)](#), Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs), or other project agreements to ensure that parties to the agreement use best efforts to increase the representation of local workers or underrepresented workers in the construction industry such as women, Black, Indigenous, and people of color, local residents, youth and young adults, veterans, or people with disabilities. In addition to sharing useful data on the project workforce, AOCs can provide a mechanism that brings stakeholders together from across the community to collaborate on solutions.



AOC Participants

AOCs often include representatives from all key project stakeholder groups. This may include general contractors, construction managers, subcontractors, construction unions, apprenticeship programs, and civic groups. Successful AOCs often hold public meetings where members of the community are encouraged to participate and contribute. The project owner, which may be a private organization or a public entity, is often responsible for convening the AOC, chairing meetings, and identifying relevant stakeholders; their leadership can be pivotal in demonstrating the importance of the AOC's objectives and can lend authority to collaborative solutions generated by the AOC.

Core Responsibilities

In general, the primary responsibilities of an AOC are to ensure that demographically disaggregated workforce participation data is collected and reported, reviewed, and that appropriate actions are taken to correct issues where identified.

- Prior to each meeting, general contractors and construction managers collect, and report detailed information on the number and percentage of work hours performed by women, people of color, local residents, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.



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- During committee meetings, members review the reports and identify contractors that are falling behind on their workforce placement and utilization goals.
- The committee may recommend and take actions to increase opportunities for women, people of color, or other underserved and underrepresented groups. This may include providing compliance assistance or regularly meeting with non-compliant subcontractors to assist in the development of strategies, such as targeted outreach and engagement with specific communities or creating more inclusive workplaces, to ensure more equitable outcomes. Special attention may be given to the largest contractors or subcontractors that are underperforming their goals. The project owner may also award incentives for contractors that meet or exceed their goals or take corrective actions for those that fail to make good-faith efforts to increase opportunities for underrepresented workers.
- AOCs can be an effective tool to assist federal contractors in meeting their equal employment opportunity obligations under the law. Any entities participating in an AOC should ensure that their efforts comply with anti-discrimination protections for workers and any other relevant laws.

Common Elements of Successful AOCs

- **Implemented early:** AOCs are more likely to succeed if they are initiated early in the project life-cycle (preferably before bidding begins) and convene by the time a general contractor is selected.
- **Representative of stakeholders:** The project owner should work with stakeholders to identify individuals that can appropriately represent their group and regularly attend meetings.
- **Representative of the community:** Project owners should ensure that civic groups and other stakeholders are included in the AOC and are representative of the broader community. For example, project owners may seek to include representatives from tradeswomen groups or Veterans Service Organizations.
- **Clear expectations:** The project owner should work with the committee to set clear expectations for members' participation, establish norms and bylaws, define workforce participation goals, and clarify corrective actions that the committee may take.
- **Regular meetings:** For AOCs to be effective in identifying and correcting issues, they should frequently and regularly meet – at least monthly.
- **Public reports and meetings:** AOCs should publish workforce participation data and hold public meetings to encourage accountability and community engagement.
- **Strong relationships:** Successful AOCs are built on trust between members, which may take time to develop. Project owners and committee members should strive to create a supportive environment and develop a shared commitment to equity.



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AOCs in Action

AOCs have been instrumental in achieving workforce equity and diversity objectives for many projects across the country.

- In [Massachusetts](#), the Gaming Commission and its licensees implemented AOCs on three casino projects to maximize opportunities for women, people of color, and veterans. The Massachusetts Gaming Act requires casino owners to develop workforce diversity plans and goals and regularly report on progress as a condition of their gaming licenses. Two of the projects exceeded their workforce goals in every category, while the third exceeded goals for people of color and veterans but fell behind for women. Through interviews with stakeholders, the Gaming Commission found that, “[a]side from making diversity goals and reporting a requirement of the gaming license, instituting the AOC process to monitor achievement and collectively solve problems was likely the single-most impactful practice.”
- In [Minneapolis](#), the Minnesota Sports Facility Authority (MSFA) consulted with stakeholders to develop an equity plan for the Minnesota Vikings Stadium and establish diversity goals for its workforce. The subsequent Project Labor Agreement (PLA) that was negotiated between the general contractor and the unions committed the signatories to its goals and established an Equity Oversight Committee to track progress on workforce goals. The committee was comprised of project owners, general contractors, subcontractors, union representatives, and training and outreach coordinators and held bi-monthly meetings that were open to the public. Community involvement was a key element in driving accountability and contributed to the project exceeding minority and women participation goals.
- In 2000, the [Port of Oakland](#) implemented a PLA, which established a social justice committee that reviews monthly reports on local hiring, apprentice utilization, pre-apprenticeship recruitment, training and referral. The committee was made up of four community members, three contractor representatives, the project manager, the PLA administrator, three union representatives, and one representative from the local Building Trades Council. The committee monitored contractor compliance, conducted on-site inspections, reviewed complaints of program violations, and resolved disputes. The committee also made program and funding recommendations on issues including pre-employment training, and the provision of supportive services such as childcare, mentoring, and transportation.
- The [Cleveland University Hospital](#) PLA established monthly tripartite meetings with the unions, hospital management, and city representatives to monitor compliance and progress on outreach and hiring goals. These meetings provided an opportunity for stakeholders to identify problems and take corrective actions and kept all parties engaged throughout the project. Participants felt that the tripartite meetings were instrumental to the project meeting its hiring goals and were effective for “averting challenges and confronting issues head on.”



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- In [Washington, D.C.](#), a group of trade union councils established a PLA with the developers of the Washington Nationals stadium that instituted local hire requirements. To monitor and ensure that these goals were met, project stakeholders created the Nationals Stadium Task Force. The oversight committee was chaired by a community leader and held monthly meetings to review outcomes. At the completion of the project, 85% of all new apprentices were hired locally.
- In 2022, [North America's Building Trades Unions \(NABTU\) and Ørsted](#) signed a PLA that will cover all of the company's offshore Atlantic windfarm construction projects from Maine to Florida. The PLA establishes diversity goals and project-by-project equity oversight committees to monitor workforce diversity performance.

AOC Resources:

Use the resources provided below to learn more about AOCs, find best practices, and see more examples.

- [The Policy Group on Tradeswomen's Issues \(PGTI\) – Access and Opportunity Committees \(AOCs\): Starting a new AOC](#)
- [Massachusetts Gaming Commission - Access and Opportunity Committee Rules of Procedure](#)
- [Jobs with Justice – Building Career Opportunities for Women and People of Color: Breakthroughs in Construction](#)

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