THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Board Report

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group

- **DEI Activities Report**

Summary

This report provides a summary of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group activities for September 2026

Purpose

Informational

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group activities for September 2026

Date of Report: 10/12/2026

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In late September and early October, DEI staff advanced Metropolitan's strategic priorities through workforce development, supplier engagement, and regional partnerships that continue to expand awareness of water-sector careers and business opportunities. Engagements strengthened relationships with educational institutions, workforce partners, small businesses, and community organizations across Southern California and the desert region, while also supporting visibility at key industry and cultural events.

GM Strategic Priority #1: EMPOWER the Workforce and Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Workforce development efforts during this reporting period focused on increasing awareness of water-sector careers among students, community members, and job seekers through participation in regional career fairs and educational engagements.

Staff participated in the City of Anaheim Career Expo, providing information on water-sector careers and opportunities at Metropolitan. Outreach continued in the Coachella Valley through participation in the Valley-Wide Employment Expo in Indio, where staff connected with job seekers and emphasized career pathways supporting operations at desert-region pumping plants. These events contributed to broader workforce awareness in communities where staffing needs and long-term outreach to prospective applicant pools are critical.

Metropolitan was also invited to participate in the Centinela Valley Union High School District's 10th Annual Industry Partner Breakfast, where Workforce Development staff learned about current academy programs and discussed alignment between educational pathways and water-industry careers. This engagement strengthened collaboration with K–12 partners and supported ongoing curriculum-to-career alignment within local school districts.

Collectively, these workforce activities expanded Metropolitan's visibility among job seekers and educators while reinforcing long-term efforts to attract broad, qualified applicant pools.

GM Strategic Priority #5: PARTNER with Interested Parties and the Communities We Serve

Business Outreach staff deepened partnerships with small businesses, community organizations, and professional associations through targeted outreach and participation in high-profile events throughout Southern California.

Metropolitan exhibited at the Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Business & Economic Development Procurement Summit. This second annual event focused on preparing a wide array of small businesses for procurement opportunities related to the upcoming Super Bowl and Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. Staff promoted Metropolitan contracting opportunities and strengthened connections with businesses preparing for major regional economic activity.

Supplier and community engagement continued through participation in the National Latina Business Women Association–Los Angeles (NLBWA-LA) Latinas in Business Awards. This annual celebration recognizes Latina

business owners for their contributions and entrepreneurial success. Metropolitan Board Chair Adan Ortega received special recognition, further elevating Metropolitan's presence and commitment to supplier and community partnerships.

Business Outreach also hosted an informational webinar in collaboration with Metropolitan's IT Cyber Security team and pre-qualified consultants. The session introduced participants to key elements of the strategic plan and highlighted upcoming contracting opportunities, supporting transparency and supplier readiness.

Staff attended the 48th Annual Asian American Architects and Engineers Awards Banquet, where Metropolitan Business Outreach and Community Engagement Section Manager John Arena was honored. Senior leadership, including Director Paula Daniels, General Manager Shivaji Deshmukh, Assistant General Managers John Bednarski, Lisa Dye, and Dee Zinke, DEI Officer Liji Thomas, and Deputy DEI Officer Lana Haddad, in attendance, reinforcing Metropolitan's ongoing partnership with AAA/e and support for diverse architecture and engineering professionals.

Additionally, staff attended the 42nd Annual Orange County Black Chamber of Commerce Awards Banquet, strengthening connections with diverse business leaders and community partners in Orange County.

These activities expanded Metropolitan's engagement with numerous suppliers, business owners, and professional organizations, reflecting Metropolitan's commitment to inclusive economic participation and community-centered collaboration.

During this reporting period, DEI staff strengthened workforce opportunities and expanded supplier engagement through targeted outreach, career fairs, and participation in regional business events. These efforts supported small business readiness, increased awareness of water-sector careers, and reinforced Metropolitan's commitment to inclusive partnerships and equitable access to employment and contracting opportunities.