



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 23, 2013

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## **Corporate Equity & Inclusion Roundtable Results in Discussion & Future Action Steps, Commitment to Convene Again in One Year**

**PITTSBURGH** – Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald was joined today by representatives from the corporate community and community organizations to discuss the recently convened Corporate Equity & Inclusion Roundtable, the discussion that occurred as a part of the Roundtable, and the resulting action steps for participants.

“This past Monday, I was proud to host the inaugural Corporate Equity & Inclusion Roundtable to begin a conversation about increasing diversity and inclusion throughout the Pittsburgh region. Over 100 attendees representing the corporate community, community organizations and non-profits committed to working together to identify practices and policies that can significantly expand workplace diversity and inclusion,” said County Executive Fitzgerald. “The event was the idea of Tim Stevens of the Black Political Empowerment Project. His leadership, as well as his personal passion and enthusiasm, ensured that we moved this issue forward.”

The Roundtable participants quickly learned that there are many organizations working on this issue, many with parallel efforts on converging tracks. The inaugural Roundtable provided a means through which participants were able to share and communicate with each other about what they’re doing independently, and also moved everyone to one path. Increasing diversity and inclusion is a challenge with which many organizations struggle. It’s not a one-size-fits-all issue. Through this effort, organizations have the opportunity to hear about other efforts and to determine what options may work best for them.

“It’s no secret that there is a significant economic disparity within the African American community. The Roundtable made it clear, fairly quickly, that we have a shared goal to improve the representation of African Americans and other people of color in managerial roles in our region,” said Tim Stevens. “We know that the challenge is bigger than we could cover in a single meeting, but we began a conversation about better recruitment, better feeder systems to move African Americans into those positions, and regarding changing the culture within companies and across our region.”

Three members of the corporate community acted as co-conveners of the Roundtable: Robert O. Agbede of Chester Engineers, Laura Ellsworth of JonesDay and Dennis Yablonsky of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. They recognized the business case for talking about diversity employment and growing the workforce. Pittsburgh is the second least diverse region at the top 100 urban metropolitan areas in the nation. Local employment rates of African Americans and people of color continue to lag behind national diversity rates.

“African Americans are under-represented in the region’s high demand occupations and sectors, and poverty rates among African Americans in Pittsburgh are among the highest in the nation,” said Dennis Yablonsky. “The Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board projects that our demand for skilled talent in the region’s growing middle jobs will outpace supply in about five years. If we want to ensure the continued economic growth of the Pittsburgh region, and the residents and employers that comprise our

economy, we must become much more effective at elevating, attracting and retaining diverse workers.”

Many of the corporate participants spoke about their efforts underway to address the under-representation of African Americans and people of color in employment and contracting in the region. Art Rooney II addressed the Roundtable about the Rooney Rule and its impact on hiring in the NFL. The hybrid Rooney Rule has been applied to all levels of employment by many organizations. The approach is just one example of steps corporations can take to affect the diversity and inclusion of African Americans in their management structure. Also highlighting their organization's efforts were Robert A. DeMichiei of UPMC, Travis Williams of the Pittsburgh Penguins, and Marsha Jones of PNC Bank.

“We recognize the strength of a diverse workforce that serves an increasingly diverse marketplace makes good business sense and provides opportunities for continued growth,” said Marsha Jones. “Our commitment to creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace is to share our approaches and best practices with others in the community.”

The conversation at the Roundtable resulted in the identification of three immediate areas of focus: retention and elevation of African Americans; encouragement of African American entrepreneurship; and identification and securing of minority suppliers with sufficient capacity and proven performance. Participants also expressed interest in improving coordination between the workforce development system, higher education and employers; working on a master document to identify action steps; and to identify best practices among employers.

“To get this effort off the ground, we have created several Action Teams that will be charged with specific responsibilities. Marsha Jones has agreed to co-chair an effort focusing on best practices with me. Our first task will be to establish a base line,” said Greg Spencer of Randall Industries, former Senior Vice President of EQT Corporation. “You can’t manage what you can’t measure, so our first step is to understand where we are and where we want to go. Later this summer, we expect to release a scorecard that will provide more detail on those measurements and allow us to begin moving forward.”

All participants emphasized that it is not too late to get involved. They encouraged governmental leaders, corporations, community organizations and others to join in the effort. Interested parties can communicate that interest to Vibrant Pittsburgh and B-PEP so that they can be “plugged in” to this shared effort. County Executive Fitzgerald and the co-conveners have committed to reconvene in one year to measure the progress and identify future steps: “For our region to succeed, we must all succeed.”

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