



Access and Opportunity Committees (AOCs): Best practices for project workforce diversity

Starting a new AOC

*“That which gets measured gets done.”**

Since 2008, [***PGTI: the Policy Group on Tradeswomen's Issues***](#) has partnered with over 100 owners, developers, contractors and building trades unions in Massachusetts to expand the demand for historically excluded workers in high skill, high demand union construction careers. Through the use of project-based **Access and Opportunity Committees (AOCs)**, tradeswomen's work hours have exceeded legally mandated targets for diverse workers on over \$6.7 billion of construction work in Massachusetts since 2012. PGTI's "how to" manual on meeting workforce goals, [***Finishing the Job: Best Practices for a Diverse Workforce in the Construction Industry***](#), provides detailed checklists for each of the stakeholder groups that are responsible for workforce diversity on construction worksite.

What is an Access and Opportunity Committee (AOC)?

Access and Opportunity Committees (AOCs) are multi-stakeholder workforce diversity monitoring committees that meet regularly—at least monthly-- to enforce workforce diversity compliance on one or more construction projects. These committees are generally convened by the project owners and involve close collaboration between project GCs/CMs, unions, community groups and other stakeholders in tracking workforce participation for women and people of color to ensure that workforce goals are met or exceeded. The work of the AOC is to:

- closely review diversity compliance reports across the project(s) and for each subcontractor and trade.
- mandate and review detailed corrective action plans and other best practices to ensure the project meets or exceeds goals for a diverse workforce.

PGTI's focus is on increasing women's access to the construction trades because women have historically been the population most excluded from these good jobs. In Boston, 50% of the women working in the trades are women of color. [Our data show that moving gender also moves race.](#)

Who is on an AOC?

AOCs should be convened and chaired by the lead decision maker for the project, for example, the developer or owner on a private project or the lead agency or authority on a public project. Committee members should represent all project stakeholders who have an interest in ensuring a diverse workforce including, but not limited to, the General Contractor/Construction Manager and subcontractors, area construction unions and apprenticeship (JATC) programs and community and civic groups.

* Congresswomen Ayanna Pressley (then Boston City Councilor) in 2011 when partnering with PGTI to make data on women in the construction trades more transparent and accessible.

Proven best practices and extensive supporting documentation are available at policygroupontradeswomen.org
Technical Assistance can be arranged by emailing tradeswomenissues@gmail.com

When should AOC begin?

The AOC can begin as soon as the project is prepared to bid and should definitely be convened by the time the GC/CM is designated. The first business of the AOC should be:

- Identify committee designees from each stakeholder group and secure a commitment to their regular participation.
- Agree on a regular schedule and time of meetings.
- Review the proven best practices for each stakeholder group that are documented in [***Finishing the Job Best, Practices for a Diverse Workforce in the Construction Industry.***](#)

The GC/CM should describe in detail how they have or will prepare all subcontractors to comply with their contractual obligations for a diverse workforce, including subs of subcontractors. PGTI is funded by the US DOL to provide Technical Assistance on workforce diversity in construction and is available to do training for new AOCs on undertaking and implementing [***Finishing the Job.***](#)

What does the AOC do?

- **REPORT:** Before each meeting of the AOC, the GC/CM prepares a report on their workforce data. The report includes a spreadsheet with work hours for the recent month and project-to-date, sorted by contractor and by trade. Detailed examples of AOC Presentations and Reports from PGTI's Targeted Projects with the UMass Building Authority and the Mass Gaming Commission are available on our website at [***Access and Opportunity Committees \(AOC\) report examples and sample contract language.***](#)
- **REVIEW:** At each AOC meeting, the GC/CM presents their report including the project progress (stage, workforce projections, timeline), the workforce data and any other relevant information on diversity progress. AOC members review the data using the Compliance Monitoring Tools described in Appendix 3 of [***Finishing the Job.***](#) The AOC's goal is to identify subcontractors and trades that need special attention as well as recognizing and better understanding the practices of those who are reaching the goals.
- **CORRECTIVE ACTION:** The GC/CM implements and reports to the AOC on corrective action practices to improve the diversity of those subcontractors who are below the goals. Corrective action steps are described in [***Finishing the Job***](#) and should include frequent meetings with non-compliant subcontractors, bringing the relevant union reps into one-on-one meetings with subs, requiring the company owner to attend meetings, requiring letters on the diversity needs of the industry to Apprenticeship personnel and their Trustees and, first and foremost, documenting ALL efforts in writing.

LEARNING COMMUNITY: Access and Opportunity Committees are multi-year commitments that follow a project or a group of projects from start to finish. Initially, members may not know and/or trust each other's motives for participation. The most successful AOCs have been those where the Committee has developed strong working relationships, where members recognize that they are in a unique learning environment and where the group grows to share a commitment to making real change in an important industry.