Better, Faster, Less Expensive, and Equitable
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We’ve all heard re our project delivery mantra: “Better, Faster, Cheaper”. Well, “less expensive” is just a nicer way to say “cheaper” but where does ‘EQUITABLE’ come from? That’s the topic of this article.

EQUITABLE is defined as “characterized by justice or fairness and impartiality toward those involved”. As a public agency, we at UW/CPO have a responsibility to be fair in our dealings with everyone in our project teams and throughout the business community. We are very aware of this in our dealings with our clients, with our process partners, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, with our Architects, Engineers, and Construction Contractors. But, we also have a responsibility to be fair throughout the whole business community. This is where it gets tricky: we even have a responsibility of fairness to business entities who do not work for us, but that wish to work for us.

So how do you develop, measure, or improve equitable behavior (or equity) in an organization? “Equity” wants to be an institutional culture similar to “customer service” or “safety”. It is not easily measured and involves us all (it cannot be assigned to one or two individuals). And, measuring it is not as easy as measuring how many projects we do or how much our projects cost. The real measure of Equity is in the day to day performance of our work.

Think about the questions below, they may be able to give you an idea of the issues we face in being Equitable in our dealings with our project team partners:

1. In a consultant selection procedure, were all Submittals of Qualifications considered equally, including firms that have not worked at UW before?

2. On a GC/CM project, were the bid packages developed in a way that allowed appropriate access to the bidding for the greatest number of firms within the construction community?

3. In our fee negotiations with our architects and engineers (A/Es), particularly in these days of reduced fees and reduced profit margins for our A/E partners, are we being fair in a way that will allow competent A/E firms to succeed in business?

4. In our discussions with our A/Es related to their subconsultant selections, do we avoid unduly influencing the prime consultant in the selection of their subconsultants and do we encourage our A/Es to share our goal of equity in their own selection processes?

5. Have we been cognizant of CPO’s aspirational goals for participation of Minority and Women Owned and shared that information with our A/Es?

Much of what Equity is relates to how open we are to the whole of the business community that we work in. As you see in thinking about some of the items above, you have to make an effort to keep Equity as an operating principal but that is one of our responsibilities as a public agency.

From the feedback I get from the consultants who work for us, UW/CPO is generally seen as fair, with some important exceptions. The picture changes a bit with firms that want to work here, but have not been able to “get past the barriers”. We are seen by many MWBE firms as being “hard to get in the door”. However we have been making some important strides and with continued focus, we will be able to meet the mantra: BETTER, FASTER, LESS EXPENSIVE AND EQUITABLE.