

City Slicker Gets a Rural Reality Check



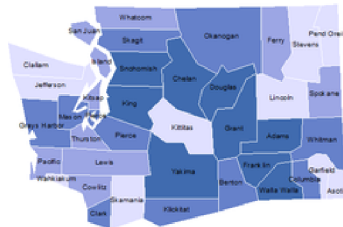
Zena Consulting
Founder / Owner

Last month I presented a seminar on "Making a Case for Small & Rural DEI in Today's Multicultural Funding Environment", at the Nonprofit Leaders Conference for Coastal & SW Washington (NPLC).

I urge leaders to talk candidly about goals and expectations - even when everyone speaks the same language, because words are directly tied to metrics and outcomes. When we discussed the bewildering and increasing variety of acronyms funders use (DEI, DEIA, Belonging, Kindness, etc.), a woman shouted, "Wait- what's BIPOC?" When I replied, "Black, Indigenous and People of Color", she exclaimed, "That's me!" Many others also hadn't heard this relatively new term.

Rural Diversity Is Increasing Fast

According to 2020 Census, 1/3 of rural children are racial or ethnic minorities. Spanish is our state's top 2nd language, with Grays Harbor and Mason counties ranking in the same category as King County, at 7-26%, (right).



WA Office of Financial Management

Giving Inequality Feels the Rural/Urban Divide

Poverty is higher in rural/small town USA than metro counties, where access to services lags further behind. Attendees described their frustration of living in a "donor desert" while trying to capture the attention and resources of heavily urban-focused funders.

Their complaints are valid. A 2018 *Giving Compass* study found that the top 1200 foundations invest twice as much in metro county organizations; noting that philanthropy, government, and business leaders can correct this imbalance quickly, if they choose to.

EVENTS



4/19 Public Works Contracting in Whatcom/Skagit Counties

Meet the Agencies - This free, in person event for small and diverse businesses is designed to help you win bids from:

1. City of Bellingham
2. Port of Bellingham
3. Skagit County
4. WWU- Western Washington University
5. WTA- Whatcom Transportation Authority
6. MRSC- Municipal Research and Services Center

These agency reps will discuss:

- How to find opportunities
- Top procurement methods
- Programs and resources
- Mistakes contractors make
- How agencies use rosters

At Bellingham Cruise Terminal, from 3:00-5:00. [Register here.](#)

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