
NUTTER CREATES NEW ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY CABINET TO FOCUS ON GROWING MINORITY AND WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESSES

One-stop-shop for business also created

Philadelphia, October 1 – Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter today signed an executive order creating an Economic Opportunity Cabinet designed to set policy and establish goals to support the development, growth and participation in contract opportunities by minority, woman and disabled owned businesses.

“Today in Philadelphia, less than 1/3 of our businesses are owned by minorities and less than 2% of our business tax receipts come from minority owned businesses,” said Nutter, who will chair the new cabinet. “That must change. That’s why I’m creating an Economic Opportunity Cabinet, made up of top officials, to refocus our efforts and renew our commitment to the growth and support of minority owned businesses.”

The executive order also dissolves the Minority Business Enterprise Council and creates the Office of Economic Opportunity, which will report to the Economic Opportunity Cabinet and the Mayor. It will be responsible for providing comprehensive support for minority, woman and disabled owned businesses throughout the City. The office will be housed at the Department of Commerce giving it, for the first time, direct access to the full array of business development tools.

Nutter announced that Michael Bell, currently the Director of Compliance at the City’s Office of Housing and Community Development, will serve as the Executive Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity and will develop an Economic Opportunity Strategy by January 31st, 2009, that will include specific recommendations on the following:

- Helping minority-owned businesses in Philadelphia build capacity by providing support and removing barriers to growth
- Improving certification of minority businesses to increase participation in City contracts
- Integrating and managing the City’s other activities to increase economic opportunity to disadvantaged residents, including implementing the recommendations of the Mayor’s Advisory Commission on Construction Industry Diversity
- Providing a mechanism to address and manage grievances related to contract compliance.

The Economic Opportunity Cabinet will be made up of the Mayor, Managing Director, Finance Director, City Solicitor, Chief Integrity Officer, Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, Deputy Mayor for Transportation and Utilities, Deputy Mayor for Health and Opportunity, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, and the Procurement Commissioner.

In order to improve the City’s efforts to support and grow ALL businesses, Nutter also announced that Kevin Dow will join the administration as Deputy Director of Commerce for Neighborhood and Business Services with responsibility for the City’s full small business services portfolio. He previously worked at Wachovia Bank where he was responsible for the bank’s corporate, philanthropic and employee engagement strategies for

the Northern Region.

“If we believe in growing businesses and creating new jobs then we need to make it easier for businesses to access the information and services they need to succeed,” Nutter said.

According to Nutter, overlapping functions and unclear lines of responsibility at the Commerce Department prevented a single point of contact for businesses seeking assistance and led to complex – and frustrating -- processes for obtaining services. Further, outdated client management tools made tracking service delivery and measuring outcomes difficult.

Dow will be responsible for overhauling the system businesses use to interact with the city, making it more user friendly and more effective. For example, he will oversee the creation of a new “one stop shop” where businesses will be assigned an expert representative who will walk them through all their interactions with the City. He will also supervise the creation of a new web portal that small companies can use to do business with the City. When the portal is complete, tasks like applying for licenses or paying fees that once required hours in line will require only a few minutes online.

Dow will work closely with the Office of Economic Opportunity to match business services with minority business needs as well as to provide customer service, outreach and marketing, technical assistance and networking support for minority business activities.