

DIASPORAS IN DEVELOPMENT

October 12, 2016

Session Title: Partnering with Diasporas in the DC Metro Area

Presenter:

- Bruce Adams, Executive Director, Montgomery County, Maryland Office of Community Partnerships
- Ngozi Nmezi, Founder, The Portier Agency (Formerly with the D.C. Office of African Affairs)
- O. Felix Obi, Commissioner for African Affairs, State of Maryland
- **Moderator:** Nicholas Bassey, Division Chief, Frontier Partnerships, Center for Transformational Partnerships, USAID

Session Summary:

Identifying opportunities to establish local partnerships is often a challenge for nascent diaspora organizations in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Attendees of this session will learn about opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SME) partnerships from a local perspective. Speakers will describe current and upcoming programs and initiatives from the Government of the District of Columbia; the State of Maryland; Montgomery County, Maryland; and private sector collaborators.

Key Themes:

- **Theme 1:** While most offices have grants, they should be primarily viewed as connectors
- **Theme 2:** Engagement with top officials and individual Diaspora members

Best Practices/Recommendations/Suggestions:

While most offices have grants, they should be primarily viewed as connectors

- State of Maryland: See their job as creating opportunities for success and growth. The office pulls together many different, existing programs, meaning they want to be seen primarily as a point of contact and not a funder.

- Resources include: Governor's Office of Community Initiatives; Small Business Development Center; Governor's Office of Minority Initiatives; Office of Small Business Resources; Diaspora Commissions
- Sister Cities ("strives to build global cooperation at the municipal level, promote cultural understanding and stimulate economic development.")
- DC government:
 - Diaspora resources include: Mayor's Office on African Affairs; Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs; Commission for African Affairs; Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs; Commission on African-American Affairs; Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Community Development
 - Offices distribute community grants
 - Economic development resources include: ExportDC (helps small businesses expand their international presence); DC China Center; Washington DC Economic Partnership ("actively position, promote, and support economic development and business opportunities in Washington, DC.")
 - Sister Cities: 14 agreements
- Maryland Office of Community Partnerships:
 - County Advisory Groups, including Middle Eastern, African Affairs, Latin American
 - These continue to evolve, with new groups being considered
 - The County Executive is engaged, but allows the groups a lot of autonomy
 - Grant programs: there are County Council and Executive grants
 - Sister Cities: have been very valuable to the county, resulting in well attended trade delegations and strong engagement on both sides.
- Engagement with top officials and individual Diaspora members
 - Commissions and offices have been established based on demographics and interest and work to engage dynamically, with everyone from high-level officials to all interested members of the public.

Discussion Topics/Audience Questions:

Do you have programs that tap into the potential of SMEs in developing countries?

- This is best addressed at the national level, with an organization such as USAID. Would encourage someone to reach out to a USAID mission if interested in a specific program. If such programs are successful, they want to be a partner in linking them with US businesses through trade missions, connections, etc. If done well, US programs strengthen the work being done by the local national government, not override it, as it is the national government's job to support companies in their own country.