



BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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Order Instituting Rulemaking for the Purpose of Reviewing and Potentially Amending General Order 156 and to Consider Other Measures to Promote Economic Efficiencies of an Expanded Supplier Base and to Examine the Composition of the Utilities' Workforce.

R.09-07-027
(Filed July 30, 2009)

RESPONSE OF AT&T CALIFORNIA (U 1001 C) AND CERTAIN OF ITS REGULATED AFFILIATES TO STAFF'S WORKSHOP REPORT DATED MAY 26, 2010

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Date: June 10, 2010

Pursuant to the Assigned Commissioner's and Administrative Law Judge's Scoping Memo and Ruling Determining the Scope, Schedule, and Need for Hearing in this Proceeding ("Scoping Memo") issued on March 17, 2010, AT&T California and certain of its Regulated Affiliates¹ (collectively "AT&T") hereby comment on the Utility Supplier Diversity Program Staff Report ("Staff Report") issued on May 25, 2010. The Staff Report is intended to summarize the workshop held in this proceeding on May 5, 2010 in Los Angeles, California.

I. INTRODUCTION

AT&T strongly agrees with the conclusion in the Staff Report that the intent of the General Order 156 ("GO 156") program is not to create a set aside for any group or to discriminate against any group. We also appreciate the Commission's statement of commitment to promoting the health of the California economy.² As stated in the Staff Report, the "Commission's goal in terms of supplier diversity is an economic development imitative and not a social responsibility program."³ To that end, we identify herein those Staff recommendations that we support as viable given the costs and benefits of such proposals. We are also committed to our aspirational goals as described in our pleading filed on May 26, 2010 in this proceeding. Finally, we commend the Commission for holding the May 5 workshop and for soliciting proposals to address these important issues.

II. BACKGROUND

The Staff Report summarizes pre-workshop written comments provided to the Staff that include over 50 suggestions submitted by 14 parties.⁴ The Staff Report also summarizes 13 solutions discussed at the May 5, 2010 workshop held in Los Angeles. Based on its review of

¹ The affiliates participating in these comments are AT&T Communications of California, Inc. (U 5002 C), AT&T Mobility LLC (New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC) (U 3060 C), Cagal Cellular Communications Corporation (U 3021 C), Santa Barbara Cellular Systems, Ltd. (U 3015 C), Visalia Cellular Telephone Company (U 3014 C), TCG Los Angeles, Inc. (U 5462 C), TCG San Francisco (U 5454 C), TCG San Diego (U 5389 C), AT&T Corp. d/b/a AT&T Advanced Solutions (U 6346 C), and SBC Long Distance, LLC d/b/a AT&T Long Distance (U 5800 C).

² Staff Report, p. 20.

³ *Id.*

⁴ The pre-workshop comments were not filed at docket and were not served on the service list. Thus, AT&T reviewed these comments for the first time in the Staff Report.

these proposals, Staff recommends eight proposals for adoption by the Commission. In these comments, AT&T indicates which of these eight recommendations it supports. The other proposals in the Staff Report are not recommended by Staff, and AT&T will not respond to each and every one of them.⁵

As an overall comment on the Staff Report, AT&T disagrees with the numerous statements in the Staff Report that at the May 5 workshop, parties and utilities agreed to certain proposals. The Staff Report repeatedly states that parties agreed to certain measures and utilities agreed to certain measures.⁶ At the May 5 workshop, those in attendance listened to many comments by vendors and utilities. There was no indication whether the speakers were or were not parties to the proceeding. In some cases, certain utilities indicated they had undertaken specific plans and actions. However, there was no voting mechanism whereby parties or utilities indicated whether or not they had implemented a described solution or whether they supported a particular proposal. While the Staff Report's indication of areas of agreements is subject to dispute and should not be relied upon by the Commission in crafting its decision in this case, AT&T's comments below clearly state where we are in agreement with Staff's eight recommendations as well as where we are in disagreement.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

From the pre-workshop written comments and the discussion from the May 5 workshop, Staff has distilled eight recommendations. Below, AT&T comments on each of these recommendations.

A. Unbundling

In summarizing the May 5 workshop, Staff states that “[m]ost of the big five utilities (AT&T, PG&E, SCE, Sempra, and Verizon) suggested they already unbundle their contracts in

⁵ AT&T's silence with respect to these proposals should not be interpreted as an agreement to these solutions. To the contrary, AT&T only supports those Staff recommendations as indicated herein and explicitly does not support any other solutions discussed in the Staff Report (with the exception of the pre-workshop comments submitted by AT&T).

⁶ See Staff Report at 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 18.

some form or another, or include sufficient contract language to motivate their primes to offer subcontracting opportunities.”⁷ This comment indicates that there is some confusion regarding the definition of “unbundling.” If unbundling is defined as encouraging prime suppliers to use Diverse Business Enterprises (“DBEs”) as subcontractors, AT&T supports this practice. AT&T has had a Prime Supplier Program in place since 1989. This program has been successful in helping AT&T grow contract opportunities for DBEs, and it continues to assist us in adding new prime suppliers, which helps our supply chain remain diverse. As part of this program, we ask our prime suppliers to develop annual DBE inclusion plans and report quarterly their progress to their stated goals.

On the other hand, if unbundling is defined as taking a large contract, dividing it into small contracts, and then finding vendors for each of the small contracts, AT&T does not follow this process today and opposes any recommendation that utilities perform this type of unbundling. As a company that operates throughout the world, AT&T must take advantage of economic efficiencies in procuring goods and services. To operate efficiently and best serve its customers, AT&T must rely on its evaluation of its business needs in deciding how to procure goods and services. Furthermore, the Staff Report does not indicate any legal authority upon which the Commission could rely upon as a basis to regulate how utilities purchase goods and services. Finally, we caution the Commission from adopting a “one-size-fits-all” model regarding unbundling. The utilities should have the flexibility to adopt practices that are best suited for their company. To this end, we support Staff’s recommendation that the parties have a best practices workshop on second and third tier subcontracting models. From such an event, utilities may choose those practices that work best to meet their business needs.

B. Inclusion of Supplier Diversity Involvement in the RFP Process

Staff states that involvement of a utility’s supplier diversity team in the early stages of an RFP process is a key factor in the participation of small and diverse businesses in procurement

⁷ *Id.* at 16.

opportunities.⁸ AT&T strongly supports this recommendation. AT&T's procurement methods and procedures incorporate the inclusion of supplier diversity throughout our sourcing process, from beginning to end. Our supplier diversity team is involved with our strategic sourcing organization as well as with business unit client groups that drive purchasing needs.

C. Prime Contractor Programs

Staff recommends that utilities encourage prime suppliers to use small and diverse businesses in their contracts, and that utilities with existing prime supplier programs follow through and “make sure that the prime follows through on their commitment.”⁹ AT&T already has a robust prime supplier plan in place, but recognizes that we can always do more in this area. Accordingly, one of our aspirational goals is to focus on implementation of our prime supplier plan with our prime suppliers for wireless and emerging technologies. AT&T Supply Chain and Fleet Operations has business plan metrics that measure and monitor prime suppliers' supplier diversity performance, and both the Supplier Diversity team and sourcing manages work to increase supplier diversity results.

D. Transparency

The Staff Report recommends that utilities be encouraged to post their procurement opportunities in a way that makes it easier for businesses to locate opportunities.¹⁰ AT&T does not believe the Commission should adopt this recommendation. However, if a utility finds this approach to be effective for its business model, then there is nothing preventing it from adopting this practice. Unlike a governmental agency, AT&T does not post its bids externally, and we do not have a public bidding system. Our attsupplierdiversity.com website allows any interested company to self-register as a prospective supplier. When we have a need to source a product or service, we use this database to help identify candidates who are good fits for our specific needs.

⁸ *Id.* at 16-17.

⁹ *Id.* at 17.

¹⁰ *Id.*

In contrast, the open bidding process tends to attract large numbers of vendors, many of whom have only marginal capabilities for the area of need. Businesses may surmise that they will make an attempt to win a bid, even though they know they are not qualified. In practical terms, there are very long odds of an unqualified bidder winning a contract. Thus, for our business, a public bidding system would be an inefficient use of everyone's time and will lead to more frustration and dissatisfaction for many bidders, especially given that responding to RFPs can be costly time drain to small businesses. Between our numerous outreach events and self-registration process, we provide maximum access to DBEs to learn about potential business opportunities that are well-matched opportunities to their businesses.

E. Specific Goals for Underutilized Areas

We disagree with the statements in the Staff Report that parties at the May 5 workshop agreed to the concept of specific goals for underutilized areas, and that the utilities suggested that they already have sub-goals and were not too concerned about this issue.¹¹ We also oppose Staff's statement that "Staff agrees with the parties that specific goals for underutilized areas be established."¹² Staff goes on to state the Commission should encourage the utilities to set voluntary goals for specific underutilized areas and that the goals be implemented on "a gradual and increasing basis over a specified time frame."¹³ The concept of "underutilized areas" is fraught with problems. There has been no definition of what constitutes underutilized for a particular category. Additionally, the underutilized areas identified by Staff have not been defined in terms of the coding structure used in the annual reports. Finally, there has been no discussion of when an underutilized area is no longer underutilized.

¹¹ *Id.* at 13. The Staff Report is problematic in that it reflects Staff assumption that certain areas are "underutilized" for all utilities. As AT&T mentioned at the May 5 workshop, the Staff has not defined what qualifies a procurement area as underutilized, nor has it adequately defined the areas it believes are underutilized. For example, in the Staff Report, the area of consultant services are deemed underutilized, but this category is not defined by any code that is reported in the annual reports. Staff has also not defined what percentage of consultant services exists at different utilities, but instead seems to assume that this procurement category is underutilized at all utilities.

¹² *Id.* at 18.

¹³ *Id.*

To evaluate the utilization issue, there would have to be (1) a complete definition of the allegedly underutilized category with respect to the reported categories in the annual reports, (2) a determination of the existing performance for the category, and (3) data presented as to the availability of DBEs for that category that could form the basis for what a reasonable target would be. As one of the companies who participated in the proceeding to set a DVBE goal, AT&T can attest that availability studies are time-consuming and expensive. Without such studies, companies would be forced to arbitrarily pick a goal that would not be based on a sound factual basis. The Commission should not force companies to adopt arbitrary goals. Furthermore, sub-goals are not needed. We currently monitor our areas of procurement and take sufficient actions when merited, without having numeric sub-goals for certain categories. And, over the more than 20 years of its existence, GO 156 has not contained such sub-goals, nor does the enabling legislation for GO 156 include such requirements. Given these concerns and the history of the GO 156 program, AT&T will not voluntarily adopt numeric sub-goals.

We also note that in the Scoping Memo, the Commission explicitly rejected “increasing parts of, or the aggregate, 21.5% target goal for DBE spend.”¹⁴ As AT&T has explained in its prior comments in this proceeding, numeric goals are vulnerable to legal challenge, especially when no factual basis has been established for such goals. For these reasons, the Staff’s recommendations regarding sub-goals for particular areas should be rejected.

F. Niche Approach

In its recommendation regarding the niche approach, the Staff Report encourages representatives for the diversity suppliers to hold matchmaking events between diverse suppliers and requests that Greenlining, CUDC or any Chamber or group organize events to introduce successful diverse suppliers to those DBEs just entering the market. Although we do not understand precisely what the Staff Report means by the term “niche approach,” we do support

¹⁴ Scoping Memo at 10.

the recommendation in this section that DBEs and nonprofit organizations arrange matchmaker events for established DBEs to network with DBEs who have been in business at least a year.

G. Industry Specific Workshops

Staff suggests that the utilities host industry-specific workshops, but makes no recommendation as to whether the Commission should host such workshops.¹⁵ We support and participate in events hosted by both the utilities and the Commission. For example, we have been participating in Commissioner Simon’s New Connections Forums for several years as well as Commissioner Bohn’s Small Business Outreach Business Expos program that has been underway for six years. For the Expos, AT&T, the other big five utilities, the water companies, and others participate in well over 12 events annually with the Commission giving a joint presentation on “How to do Business with the State and Utilities” and conducting matchmaking interviews with small businesses and DBEs. In addition to the Commission-sponsored events, the California Utilities Diversity Council’s subcommittee on Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises organized a workshop last year that AT&T hosted to identify more DVBEs to work with utilities. We also coordinate with other utilities to organize events for legal services throughout the year.

With respect to future events, as we discussed in our aspirational goals, we would like the Commission to assist us in hosting workshops for consulting services and best practices. These workshops would be in addition to the events that AT&T already sponsors as part of its regular course of business.¹⁶

H. Disabled Veterans Business Enterprises Participation

The Staff Report states the limitations of the definition of DVBE is a matter for the State Legislature to resolve. AT&T agrees that the restriction on the definition of DVBE is a statutory matter that would require Legislative action to revise. However, AT&T notes that it met the Commission’s DVBE goal for 2009. Furthermore, as described in our pleading addressing our

¹⁵ Staff Report at 18-19.

¹⁶ For a calendar of events, visit <http://www.attsuppliers.com/sd/>.

aspirational goals, we have launched two new initiatives aimed at assisting disabled veterans in California.

IV. CONCLUSION

AT&T supports the Commission's efforts to take a fresh look at GO 156. As discussed herein, several of the recommendations in the Staff Report have merit and should be adopted by the Commission.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 10th day of June 2010.

Respectfully submitted



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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served a copy of the **RESPONSE OF AT&T CALIFORNIA (U 1001 C) AND CERTAIN OF ITS REGULATED AFFILIATES TO STAFF'S WORKSHOP REPORT DATED MAY 26, 2010** in **R.09-07-027** by electronic mail, U.S. mail, and/or by hand-delivery to the persons on the official Service List.

Executed this 10th day of June 2010, at San Francisco, California.

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Michelle K. Choo

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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