

LaVerne Hall

Born into a family of entrepreneurs, LaVerne has always seen entrepreneurship as the pathway to generational wealth. Her advocacy began as teenager, as a Rev. Jesse Jackson protégé she understood very early the barriers that are inherent in the system to prevent people of color from achieving the levels of success that is possible.

LaVerne joined the Women's Business Development team during the 1990's and was able to combine her passion for both as the Procurement Technical Assistance director, assisting women owned businesses with the necessary tools do due business with government agencies. This understanding of the government's procurement process revealed to LaVerne the disparities that resulted from the known barriers that exist. She was eventually recruited by Chicago Public Schools and Cook County to monitor, report compliance and help increase the agency's levels of supplier diversity.

Chicago Public Schools had set a goal of 25% MBE and 5% WBE participation. However, the goals had not been achieved until LaVerne arrived and began working with the purchasing department to implement purchasing practices that allowed smaller firms to participate in the bidding process. As the chief compliance officer all purchases over $25,000 required LaVerne's signature before it could be approved by the Board. After 2 years and a disparity study the Board of Education increased the goal to 30% MBE and 10% WBE.

LaVerne was recruited to Cook County right after it lost the Builder's Association Greater Chicago (BAGC) case that struck down its M/WBE program. The judge placed a temporary stay on Cook County's program until it was able to demonstrate it had revised the program to meet the federal requirements to withstand the legal challenge. The Board President had already conducted the disparity study needed to set realistic goals and LaVerne came in to guide Cook County through the process of implementing a M/WBE program that can withstand a legal challenge.

LaVerne is now the CEO of **CAN DO** Corporation…**C**onsulting **A**ssociates **N**egotiating **D**iversity **O**pportunities. For the past 10 years LaVerne has worked with a team of business consultants helping small businesses with certifications, finding the funding needed to sustain and grow their businesses and identify government contract opportunities. Recently she began to work with the State's, Illinois Solar for All, small & emerging business program to increase the level of equity in the state's clean energy industry economy thru the state's ILSFA program, an initiative funded with an investment of $7 billion to enable low-income and disadvantaged communities to deploy and benefit from the distributed solar energy.