

The Impacts of Supplier Diversity and Responsibility on Carbon Emission Reduction Strategies

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Introduction

My name is Tiffany Taylor, and I am a rising 3rd year doctoral student in the joint Medical Anthropology PhD program at the University of California, San Francisco and the University of California, Berkeley. I am interested, broadly, on research pertaining to carbon emission reduction, energy efficiency, climate health, climate change, human rights, gender equality, and health disparities.

Impactful energy efficiency strategies focus on buying technology products that lower carbon emissions. Low-carbon emission technologies LCET “are referred to as innovative technical solutions that are characterized by a low emission intensity, compared to state of the art alternatives” (Weforum, 2022). Energy Star is a label for products that signify a product uses less energy than a standard model; it emits less greenhouse gas emissions. For example, green computing reduces energy consumption and lowers carbon emissions due to its innovative design (IBM, 2022). Technology hardware products that are energy star and EPEAT certified lower carbon emission. A value-added reseller (VAR) is a company that resells software, hardware, and other products. UCSF works with SHI for software products, a Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE). Supporting working groups that are more structurally diverse and focused on energy efficiency technologies may result in improvements in lowering carbon emissions (Cummings 2004). UCSF is exploring more ways to increase economic and socially responsible spending through value-added reseller (VAR) programs.



Introduction and Project Goals

Research shows that some organizations rely upon effective training and staffing to meet supplier diversity goals. Other goals include certification as part of the training program so that employees are well equipped with the tools necessary to effectively engage with and manage effective and efficient supplier diversity programming. Companies prioritize emissions reductions on every level from large to small; a recent study analyzed supply chain governance strategies using large scale empirical data and found that regional and sector diversity have large impacts on emissions reduction strategies (Huang et al., 2020).

Goal: Conduct a qualitative study to provide a more holistic understanding of the perspectives of sustainability professionals regarding the potential benefits of supplier diversity. The top goal is to gain more information that UCSF can use to adopt a supplier diversity program and learn about the need for a supplier diversity program and the positive impacts it can have on reducing carbon emissions.

Materials and Methods

There were two critical parts of this project. The first was conducting research on the impact of supplier diversity and responsibility on Carbon Emission Reduction Strategies. To do this, I conducted a systematic review of studies and narrowed the studies based on selected criteria. The second portion of this project included collecting qualitative data. I conducted in-depth interviews with sustainability professionals and archival research to learn more about the links between supplier diversity and carbon emissions. The use of in-depth interviews allowed me to use a discovery type of methodology for this exploratory study and my overarching goal was to gain a more holistic and thorough understanding of the respondent’s point of view regarding supplier diversity and strategies for carbon emission reduction.

The most critical part of this fellowship from a student perspective was learning about how supplier diversity programs work and the importance of asking the right questions. I talked to sustainability professionals about how responsibility and diverse vendors can market their services to entice entities to support their carbon reduction mission. Across the board, there was a strong consensus in the belief that adopting a supplier diversity program was important. Yet there was concern over how supplier diversity companies operate specifically to reduce cost, increase energy efficiency, and reduce overall carbon emissions.



Results and Outcomes

After completing several in-depth interviews, including responses from the Sustainability Office, and other energy policy advocates, advisors, Professors, I noticed a significant focus on carbon reduction strategies that involved (1) cost savings, (2) creative strategies for energy efficiency, (3) buying technology products that reduce carbon emissions, and (4) prioritizing supplier diversity and responsibility. Respondents also detailed how they viewed supplier diversity as an effective route towards creating positive social impact and innovative solutions to carbon emission reduction strategies. Those interviewed also noted their beliefs on what supplier diversity meant to them. Supplier diversity is the belief in conducting business that is inclusive and diverse, supplier diversity includes putting inclusion and diversity at the forefront. The primary focus is set on establishing, connecting with, and sustaining strong relationships with diverse suppliers.

Call to Action: The goal seemed to focus on the need to reduce carbon emissions by utilizing strategies that take advantage of reducing carbon emissions while promoting diversity and inclusion on campus.

Conclusions

This qualitative study provided significant insight into the need for VAR supplier diversity entities to create compelling stories on how they can have a positive impact for a potential partner financial while also helping that entity to reduce carbon emissions. Numerous studies indicate that there are significant positive impacts of supplier diversity and responsibility on carbon emission reduction strategies. Diverse teams create diverse perspectives that can create a compelling story that focuses on cost reduction and improving inclusion and diversity efforts. Furthermore, “A handful of socially conscious major companies have long played a role in addressing racial injustice through supplier diversity programs that promote an inclusive approach to procurement. As the spotlight on systemic racism roils the United States, these programs are more important than ever, yet too few companies have them and many of those who do have allowed their diversity initiatives to become token gestures.”

Future Goals

1. Expand supplier diversity programming across all UC campuses and focus on buying technology products that lower carbon emissions
2. Create a certification program on supplier diversity
3. Create educational and marketing materials to enhance the uptake of supplier diversity programming
4. Create positive social impact and innovation by investing in supplier diversity

Literature Cited

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