

Elizabeth A. Vazquez, CEO and Co-Founder of WEConnect International

PLEASE NOTE: Reach out to Rebecca Pearson, Chief Marketing Officer, to set up interview

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Elizabeth Vazquez is a well-recognized name in the global supplier diversity and inclusion space. WEConnect International, the non-profit organization which she co-founded with member corporations, provides women a platform to sell their goods and services in a global marketplace.

Elizabeth believes that procurement executives and supplier diversity and inclusion industry leaders must work together to maximize collective impact: “We need to quickly shift from regulation compliance and small programs towards bold actions that leverage purchasing power at scale to build more inclusive and resilient economies. We need deeper stakeholder engagement where inclusion is a core business strategy. We need to focus on building more impact focused organizations so that everyone can contribute to and benefit from innovation, economic growth and job creation.”

Economic empowerment for women impacts local economies. According to the World Bank, one in three businesses around the world are owned by women. And yet less than one percent of large corporate and government spend goes to women-owned businesses globally, emphasizing the need to embrace the business case for inclusive sourcing to correct a massive market failure.

In order to accelerate progress toward the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal 5 Gender Equality (SDG 5), by 2030, WEConnect International is launching its #Rise2theChallenge campaign for its 110+ global members. Organizations will have one year to publicly commit to a specific spend target and/or relevant project with women-owned businesses globally. Over the course of the next year, WEConnect International will track, aggregate and share the results—culminating in a celebration on March 8, 2022. “Rise to the Challenge” will highlight how supplier diversity and inclusion efforts drive more money into the hands of women-owned businesses by enabling them to compete in the global marketplace.

Born out of a global committee within the Women’s Business Enterprise National Council or WBENC in 2009, WEConnect International is the only global certification body with an international database of women suppliers based in more than 120 countries. Elizabeth attributes the growth and success of the organization to corporate champions that have believed in the mission and supported the organization from the beginning such as Accenture, Boeing, Cisco, EY, IBM, Intel, PG&E, Pfizer, Walmart and more.