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In 2019, New York State saw big shifts in leadership, policy and technology. This issue of *Diversity Agenda* has been developed to help you strategically navigate through the transformations and changes happening within today's business climate and work culture. We are here to provide input on how the new faces of leadership, innovative procurement methods and technology will impact your professional growth and business opportunities.

As we celebrate many of the positive changes that are represented in this issue of Diversity Agenda, it's important to reflect on the hard work, advocacy and tenacity it took to bring forth these metamorphoses. As an active participant in the discussions surrounding the reauthorization of Article 15-A, the State's legislation to expand its Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Program, I saw first-hand how collaboration can create a competitive edge during negotiations. From focus groups to industry-wide meetings that honed our community's priorities and goals, we were prepared, and our talking points encompassed a broad spectrum of opinions, while being concentrated and targeted.

When the needle of equal opportunity and gender equality needs to be pushed, we do it faster, more more efficiently and more concisely by working together to create a unified voice for diversity and inclusion.

How Can You Become a Collaborator?

At your next pre-bid meeting, think of future teaming possibilities with other certified firms. If you are attending a meeting with an elected official or procurement director, convey your thoughts as they relate to the MWBE/DBE/SDVOB community as a whole – and maybe even bring a fellow small business owner. Power in numbers, right?

I hope you find this issue of Diversity Agenda useful in navigating the changes as we move from 2019 into 2020 and beyond. I also challenge you to take on a roadblock or a daunting situation with the spirit of collaboration!

Let me know your thoughts. Write to me at rsacks@diversityagenda.com

RENEE SACKS, PH.D.
Publisher, Diversity Agenda

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DIVERSITY/AGENDA™
Content Creating Change

Diversity Agenda is a print and digital platform that creates meaningful conversations on diversity and inclusion across every industry. Our publications, newsletters, social media and videos feature key decision makers, new ideas and the breaking news that are important to our readers. Our special events and outreach programs build on industry trends and cutting-edge agendas to create robust conferences and forums.

www.diversityagenda.com

Columbia University and Diversity Agenda Host the Launch of Columbia's Construction Diversity Initiative

Industry Roundtable focuses on research, policy and training initiatives for minority, women, veteran and related diversity stakeholders



CONSTRUCTION DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

Diversity Research, Policy and Training for the Building Industries

From left to right: Dr. Renee Sacks, Publisher of Diversity Agenda – David Greenberg, Executive Vice President of Facilities and Operations, Columbia University – David Paterson, New York State's 55th Governor and Senior Vice President and Senior Advisor at Las Vegas Sands Corp. – Dr. Jason Wingard, Dean of the School of Professional Studies, Columbia University – Francisco X. Pineda, Faculty & Program Director School of Professional Studies, Columbia University – Tanya Pope, Assistant Vice President for University Supplier Diversity, Columbia University Facilities and Operations

Forging a new, collaborative approach to diversity and inclusion in the construction industry is at the heart of CDI. Working together, Francisco Pineda, Faculty & Program Director, School of Professional Studies, Columbia University, Tanya Pope, Assistant Vice President for Supplier Diversity at Columbia University Facilities and Operations and Renee Sacks, Ph.D., Publisher of *Diversity Agenda*, have designed a new framework for creating positive change and growth for small and medium-sized businesses in construction.

On August 6, 2019, the Columbia University School of Professional Studies, Columbia University Facilities & Operations and their media partner, *Diversity Agenda*, hosted an industry roundtable to launch the Construction Diversity Initiative (CDI). The first of its kind, CDI is an interdisciplinary research, policy, and training initiative within Columbia University to produce, deploy and transfer knowledge around minority, women, veteran, workforce, accessibility and related diversity stakeholders in the building industries.

The roundtable table included senior members from our city and state's largest agencies as well as senior executives from the private sector, elected officials, academics, and the construction industry's key thought leaders on issues related to diversity and inclusion. The discussion was hosted at Columbia University's historic Low Library Rotunda, an impressive building modeled after the classic Parthenon – setting a symbolic tone of the importance of the new initiative. Keynotes were provided by former New York State Governor David Paterson and key Columbia University Leadership, including Dr. Jason Wingard, Dean of the School of Professional Studies and David Greenberg, Executive Vice President of Facilities and Operations.

"What we are trying to do is bring together City and State agencies, the regional educational institutions and the construction industry," said Dr. Jason Wingard. "Through this initiative we are focusing on exposing education to a wider set of non-traditional students, and we are tasked with helping MWBEs, veterans and diverse populations

break through large scale construction projects – and it will take this ecosystem of working together to create change."

"The University prides itself on our longstanding commitment to promote diversity throughout the construction industry," said David Greenberg. "CDI will contribute greatly to our ability to promote and advance diversity across all phases of development design and construction. CDI's evidence-based approach will help Columbia, New York City and other institutions build on the successes we are already creating."

Many people here today have been at the forefront of the diversity conversation, especially the professionals from Columbia University," said Governor David Paterson. "Today, capital construction projects are larger and more complex than ever before, and we have to work together to give minority, women and veteran-owned businesses the support and opportunities they need to grow their firms to scale. CDI is moving this dialogue forward, and I thank Dr. Wingard and David Greenberg for including me in this important initiative."

Following the opening remarks, a presentation of CDI, its mission and goals was provided by Francisco X. Pineda, Faculty and Program Director of the Master of Science in Construction Administration at Columbia University's School of Professional Studies and Tanya Pope, Columbia's Assistant Vice President for University Supplier Diversity, presented CDI's mission, vision, and goals.

After attendees were able to learn more about CDI and what its partners are hoping to accomplish through

research, policy and training, Dr. Renee Sacks, Publisher of *Diversity Agenda* moderated a conversation amongst the roundtable participants – with the goal of further understanding the current challenges that relate to the diversification of the construction industry. Key decision makers from State and City agencies and authorities, as well as prime contractors and owners provided insights on the difficulties, best practices and how CDI can support their shared mission of diversity and inclusion.

Following the roundtable, the CDI leadership team, including Francisco Pineda, Tanya Pope, and Dr. Renee Sacks will bring forth a broader action plan to engage leadership, operational and advisory boards to advance CDI's operations and programs.

“Today, capital construction projects are larger and more complex than ever before, and we have to work together to give minority, women and veteran-owned businesses the support and opportunities they need to grow their firms to scale.”

DAVID PATERSON
Senior Vice President and Senior Advisor to Rob Goldstein, President & COO Las Vegas Sands Corp.

Changing the Approach to Diversity

Combining Diversity Research, Policy and Training for the Building Industry

Research First...
CDI's mission is to promote and sustain an economic development agenda in New York's construction market through scholarship, pedagogy and best practice. CDI is the first of its kind, and its research agenda will be oriented towards three principle domains: (i) learning, training and development, (ii) investigating key diversity research questions and (iii) data collection and analysis. More specifically, in the initial year, CDI will seek to build the foundations for a set of frameworks, research lines, a body of knowledge and a training curriculum to promote and advance diversity across all phases of the development, design, and construction process, specifically as it relates to institutional, transportation, infrastructure and emerging technologies.

Capacity as a Strategic Necessity...
The New York metropolitan area is currently undergoing one of the largest construction expansions in recent history. Over \$200 billion in construction activity is planned in the next five years alone with infrastructure projects sponsored by the public and private sector expected to last well beyond 2030. In aggregate, this will represent the region's largest building initiative in history, with first and second order effects on our future workforce, community and the equity of our economic development.

Not surprisingly, New York State and New York City have made Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise participation a leading priority in their procurement and economic development strategies. Columbia University was the earliest adopter of high diversity goals. With its Minority, Women and Locally-owned business goal of 35 percent established in 2008,

it changed the game for private entities. At the same time, the University also established a workforce goal of 40 percent, which it has achieved each year since its establishment. In his 2014 State of the State address, Governor Andrew Cuomo set New York State procurement goals for MWBE utilization at 30 percent, the nation's highest governmental goal. The following year, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the OneNYC plan with a ten-year goal of reaching \$16 billion in expenditures with MWBEs, hoping for similar utilization benchmarks. Today, New York State leads the nation having awarded \$2.5 billion in state contracts to MWBEs, representing 26.82 percent MWBE utilization in FY 2017-2018.

These efforts have not gone without substantial debate, legislative opposition, as well as legal challenges. MWBEs will account for a significant and increasing part of the construction project delivery and supply chain network. And while there might be a sincere desire by most stakeholders to see these programs succeed in their intended purpose, the lack of robust scholarship, data, capacity building efforts and evidence-based analysis hinders progress.

Policy, Programming, & Progress...
A cross-sectional, independent, and longitudinal research agenda can begin informing the policy-making process and support current capacity building strategies. This agenda will also ensure that we are deploying effective and evidence-based capability development and training programs intended to build the sustainable capacities, competencies and access of all diverse stakeholders in construction. A further course will be to challenge both government and private entities

to implement policies that reduce barriers for MWBEs such as non-assent Project Labor Agreements (PLAs), Owner Controlled Insurance Programs (OCIPs), a portfolio of contracts that don't require bonding, and partnering with Community Development Funding Institutions (CDFIs) to offer mobilization loans on contracts, all of which Columbia University has done.

Access and capacity building would level the landscape towards a construction industry more representative of our market population and stakeholder universe. Given the recent updates on the Reauthorization of Article 15-A legislation, it is the perfect time to spearhead an initiative that can meaningfully contribute to evidence-based policy making through research, dialogue and programming.

Closing the Opportunity Gap...
Between the opportunity and diversity gap is a significant barrier to the agenda's effectiveness and immediate impact on the industry, the diverse communities it serves and our development initiatives. An opportunity exists to shape New York MWBE programs in ways that can foster meaningful and sustained change, and just as important, private, New York City and New York State programs can continue setting the example for a national MWBE agenda. Strengthening these programs through independent research and evidence-based analysis and training should be an important and prominent policy and industry-wide objective no matter where one falls on the policy line.



“ With the success that Columbia University has experienced on its Construction and Facilities MWLBE program and the phenomenal growth of diverse programs offered on our Manhattanville project, we are anxious to share best practices with agencies and institutions in the region, that allow us to move the bar even further.”

TANYA POPE
Assistant Vice President for University Supplier Diversity & Program Integration
Columbia University Facilities and Operations

“ Communication and collaboration will be the key to growing diverse businesses. *Diversity Agenda* will provide the media distribution channel for new ideas and shared practices.”

RENEE SACKS, PH.D.
Publisher
Diversity Agenda

“ Considering the large pipeline of construction projects being planned in our region, there is no better time to support our regional talent base, and further integrate our diverse constituents and stakeholders into the extraordinary modernization programs in our city and state.”

FRANCISCO X. PINEDA
Faculty & Program Director, School of Professional Studies
Columbia University



Women **Creating Change**

In June 2018, when the New York State legislative session ended with only a one-year extender of Article 15-A, legislation that created the New York State Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) program, it left certified firms, public and private sectors decision makers and organizations like the Women Builders Council (WBC) wondering, what's next?

Fast-forward to January 2019 – with a newly elected democratic majority in the State Senate, advocates and supporters of New York State MWBE Program were looking forward to not only a five-year extender of the program, but expanded provisions as well. As the legislative session progressed, a group of women, including small business owners, attorneys and executives began with a mission of building consensus – working with certified firms, general contractors, non-profit industry associations as well as the agencies and authorities they did business with. The main objective – to extend and improve the NYS MWBE Program, to grow small businesses and create a level playing field in State contracting.

"WBC has always been known for our advocacy and public policy outreach," said **Stephanie Burns**, President of the Women Builders Council (WBC) and Vice President of Community and Citizenship at Turner Construction. "Our Board Members spent hours reviewing draft legislation, compiling data and taking the trips up to Albany to meet with Legislators and representatives from the Governor's office. We are a solutions-oriented organization, and I'm incredibly proud of our ability to spark real change throughout the construction industry?"

Building Industry Consensus

WBC was created with the mission of increasing diversity and the role of women in the construction industry. Founded in 2004, WBC has become the leading association for women in the building industries. From certified MWBEs to women executives at major construction firms, WBC is committed to leveling the playing field for women in the construction, architecture, engineering and related professional services firm, while creating increased opportunities for certified small businesses.

"What sets WBC apart from other organizations during the Article 15-A negotiations, was our ability to bring together every significant participant on a project," said **Lorraine D'Angelo**, WBC's Senior Policy Advisor and President of LDA Compliance Consulting, Inc., "From the investors to the designers, owners, general contractors, subcontractors and certified firms, our board members represented the full spectrum of the construction industry."

For two years, WBC utilized their relationships and positions on other industry boards to create a working group and build consensus. WBC's Public Policy Committee, chaired by Citnalta's Vice President and General Counsel, **Jayne Czik**, worked in partnership with the certified small business community, industry associations and elected officials to provide feedback and tangible solutions to the concerns raised regarding the Reauthorization of Article 15-A. As the legislative process progressed, WBC was active and diligent in making sure that the implementation of new rules would benefit all members of the construction industry.

How WBC Built Consensus and Continues to Unify the Construction Industry

Special Industry-Wide MWBE Study Group

WBC's Public Policy Committee got into the nitty gritty of policy by participating in an intensive multi-week Study Group that included hours of calls on a variety of topics related the program with other industry professionals as well as representatives from the NYS Senate and Assembly. Many of the suggestions from the Study Group were incorporated into the new Article 15-A, with the goal of enhancing the program. Both the Assembly and the Senate and the MWBE Leadership from both houses provided an open environment to review issues and concerns from MWBEs, primes and other industry professionals.

"It was important to bring together the various organizations that were going to be impacted by this legislation," said Czik. "We wanted to have an honest and direct conversation about the importance of extending the program, and the ways in which its extension could create positive change throughout the industry."

A Game Changing Legislative Breakfast

Utilizing their more personal, hands-on approach, in early June, WBC members headed to Albany just days before the final MWBE bill was approved. Their goal was to reaffirm their talking points and provide key information and data. **Kristine De Napoli**, President of KND Electric, a WBC Member and also First Vice President at New York Electrical Contractors Association, made the trip up to Albany to provide financial data on the cost of construction, information that impacted the final determination of a \$15 million Personal Net Worth for MWBEs. WBC created such a well-prepared and unified voice for the MWBE community, that when they spoke, legislators listened, the Governor's office listened, and the outcome changed.

A Commitment to Industry Education: WBC Hosts Article 15-A Legislative Briefing

On September 18, 2019, WBC hosted a special legislative briefing for its members on the newly reauthorized Article 15-A and its impact on the construction industry. The conversation was moderated by WBC Executive Director, **Renee Sacks, Ph.D.** and included presentations from New York State's Deputy Secretary for Civil Rights Jonathan Smith and Acting First Assistant Counsel, Nadine Fontaine to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo who shared details about various parts of the new program and the ways in which WBC members could continue to be a part of the conversation.

"As the implementation of new rules and the creation of new regulations occur, we will continue to be at the forefront of the issues," noted WBC, Co-Founder and Past President and CEO of Bradford Construction Corp. **Sandra Wilkin**. "WBC has created a credible, strong and sustainable voice as advocates for equal opportunity in our industry. and we will continue our efforts as the rules and regulations are promulgated."



On July 15, 2019, Governor Cuomo signed into law S.6575/A.8414, which reauthorizes the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) program for five more years to ensure ongoing and meaningful participation of MWBEs in contracted State projects. The reauthorization of the law includes enhancements that will enable even more MWBEs to participate in and benefit from the program.

The extension and expansion of S.6575/A.8414 is enhanced by the signing of two additional bills: S.6301/A.7795 and S.6418A/A8407.

S.6301/A.7795 authorizes the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York to create a four-year procurement pilot program to further expand contracting opportunities for MWBEs and small businesses, while S.6418A/A8407 authorizes an increase of the threshold of New York City's discretionary purchasing authority from \$150,000 to \$500,000 making such threshold consistent with the State's increased authority.

Governor’s Program Bill #4-MWBE Reauthorization

Legislative History

Under Governor Mario Cuomo, Article 15-A of the Executive Law, was signed into law on July 19, 1988, authorizing the creation of an Office (now Division) of Minority and Women’s Business Development to promote employment and business opportunities on state contracts for minorities and women. Under this statute, state agencies are charged with establishing employment and business participation goals for minorities and women. Under Governor David A. Paterson, Article 15-A was reauthorized and set goals at 10 percent.

In 2019, New York State extended the MWBE program with passing of the **Governor’s Program Bill #4 -MWBE Reauthorization**. The bill is the most impactful policy initiative since Governor Andrew M. Cuomo increased the state’s MWBE goal to 20 percent in 2011 and to 30 percent in 2014. The new legislation is anticipated to significantly advance the State’s diversity initiative for MWBEs as well as in the workplace and workforce.

Today, New York State is leading the nation in its FY 2017-2018 performance with MWBEs winning over \$2.5 billion in New York State contracts and representing 28.62 percent utilization. The new programs and initiatives outlined in the reauthorization will further the diversification of state contracting, and WBC expects the construction industry will also see significant benefits and returns on investment that will occur after the new policies set forth in the legislation are implemented.

Legislative Timeline and Intent

Under statute, Article 15-A of the Executive Law authorizes the Department of Economic Development’s Division of Minority and Women-Owned Business Development (DMWBD) to promote employment and business opportunities on state contracts for minorities and women owned businesses. This legislation directs state agencies and authorities with establishing business participation goals for minorities and women, with the intent of diversifying the companies that bid and win state contracts. The new legislation also authorizes DMWBD to organize outreach events, training and educational opportunities for MWBE firms across the state.

The authorization and the requirements of the current program will expire on December 31, 2019, and the Governor’s program bill will extend the sunset provision to December 31, 2024.

In 2016, New York State released the findings of their 2016 Disparity Study, which evaluated the participation by MWBEs in government contracting compared to the availability of MWBEs in the marketplace. The Governor’s program bill expands upon the requirements of the MWBE program, based upon the findings of the Disparity Study, with the goal of enhancing and improving upon the program.

On June 16, 2019, Governor Cuomo’s program bill was introduced by Senator James Sanders, Jr. and Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte. The legislation was passed by both houses of the legislature and on July 15, 2019, Governor Cuomo signed S.6575/A.8414 into the law. The extension of the program and its expansion was a top priority for the Governor and his partners in the legislature and it provided Empire State Development (ESD) with the tools needed to continue to expand the NYS MWBE Program and further efforts to diversify the construction industry.

The legislation signed into law intends to address the recommendations proposed by various organizations and advocacy groups, as well as technical issues brought forth throughout the implementation of the program. The new bill also seeks to make several amendments that will continue the State’s efforts to provide equal access to its contracting system and opportunities and yield outcomes for three important areas:

- 1 CAPACITY BUILDING
- 2 JOB CREATION
- 3 PROGRAMMATIC SUSTAINABILITY

1 CAPACITY BUILDING

Expanding Opportunities and Building Capacity For MWBEs

The Reauthorization of Article 15-A includes changes that provide tools to assist certified MWBEs grow, build capacity and retain the capital they need to bid and win larger projects.

DISCRETIONARY SPENDING	The legislation increases agency and authority discretionary purchasing threshold to \$500,000. This will enable smaller MWBEs to participate in larger contracts, building their capacity, experience and portfolio with an agency or in a new market sector.
PERSONAL NET WORTH (PNW)	The Governor’s program bill increases PNW from \$3.5 million to \$15 million, making more companies eligible to participate in the program. The bill provides the Director with the authority to set the PNW requirement for MWBE certification via regulations and excludes certain holding companies from the PNW calculation.
BIDDING CREDITS	The new legislation enhances opportunities for MWBE prime contractors by establishing bidding credits for low-bid construction projects of up to \$1.4 million and increases the size of procurements that can include bidding credits each year with inflation.

Advancing Mentorship Opportunities

While providing access to contract opportunities is important to diversity in New York State, so is creating a more inclusive construction industry through focused diversity best practices and expanding the mentorship programs that are available for MWBEs.

“Diversity practices” will now also mean the utilizing or mentoring MWBEs in contracts awarded by a state agency or other public corporations, such as subcontractors and suppliers. The director may also identify and establish mentorship opportunities with other businesses development programs to increase capacity and better prepare MWBEs for bidding on contracts with state agencies upon successful completion of the mentorship opportunity. Mentorship opportunities will be intended to ensure mentor and mentee are connected based on a commercially useful function. While WBC embraces mentorship as a valuable tool to increase capacity, ESD must clearly address if and how mentoring will be accomplished on projects, including how diversity practices will be measured where the mentee is a subcontractor to the mentor prime contractor.

Providing the Director with enhanced authority to define Commercially Useful Function (CUF)

Also, ESD is authorized to establish criteria for agencies to credit MWBE participation towards goals based on the CUF provided by an MWBE. This enhanced authority to define CUF appears to be a response to concerns from contractors and MWBEs about the inability to assist an MWBE because of strict interpretations about violating the CUF standard. Clear direction and guidelines will be required, and state agencies and authorities must be mandated to provide timely guidance in writing.

2 CREATING JOBS

Article 28, Workforce Diversity Program, is one of the more ambitious initiatives in the new law. Although aspirational, it establishes a new protocol for evaluating workforce diversity for a project. The “aspirational” workforce participation goals will set forth the expected participation by hours worked by gender, race and ethnicity and by each construction trade, profession and occupation. Information will come from DOL website. For each government contract in excess of \$100,000 in the construction industry, the contractor and its subcontractors must make every effort through documented good faith efforts to meet pre-established worker diversity goals or request a waiver of its inability to do so.

State Goal Setting, Project by Project

Each state agency shall establish in the state contract the expected level of participation by minority group members and women in each of the construction trades, professions and occupations required in performance of the work of the state contract. In cases where the goal is not feasible, the state agency shall document numerical evidence demonstrating that the application of the aspirational goal would not be practical, feasible or appropriate.

While WBC embraces workforce diversity, especially for the inclusion and increase of women construction workers and women construction professionals, it questions how the new program will work. While we have many questions, specifically in the area of workforce diversity, the real question is how do contractors and subcontractors prevent an itinerant workforce?

There’s a value to both employers and employees to having a stable job at a company and going from project to project as opposed to companies laying off workers at the end of each project and hiring new workers for each project based upon gender, race and ethnicity and by each construction trade, profession and occupation. Also, how will a company recruit skilled and trained labor and talent without violating Equal Employment Opportunity regulations? The need to increase workforce and workplace diversity throughout the construction industry is a valid one; however, the means may not accomplish the intended measure without practical consideration of the unique nature of the workforce required to build in New York State.

3 PROGRAMMATIC SUSTAINABILITY

Programmatic sustainability is another important outcome of the new Reauthorized Article 15A. The new legislation substantially expands the role of Empire State Development thought its Director and statewide advocate to review MWBE utilization, conduct audits, investigate MWBE complaints and, overall ensure that documentation confirming good faith efforts are valid – all with an eye on maximizing MWBE participation in New York State.

The new legislation strengthens the certification program by specifically allowing revocation of a certification for convictions for misrepresenting the ownership status of the company. However, ESD must embark on an even stronger course to ensure a robust certification program, which will now include the extension of certification from three to five years. At present, issues related to processing time to be certified and re-certified and to appeal a denial take far too long and impact an MWBE’s ability to do business in the public sector.

Goal Setting. The legislation also requires agencies to consider findings of the most recent Study in setting goals and removes references to the 2010 Study. Every four years, beginning September 2020, each contracting state agency must submit a four-year growth plan as part of its annual report to the governor and legislature pursuant to section 164 of Article 15-A.

The new legislation amends the goal setting language through its emphasis in several places the need to consider the findings of the disparity study and limit the consideration of the availability of MWBEs to only those MWBEs ‘reflected in the directory of certified MWBEs’. WBC encourages Empire State Development of to take steps to improve the accuracy of the directory that continues to include incomplete information that often precludes the selection of MWBEs with the capabilities and financial capacity to perform services.

Transparency. The new legislation facilitates increased transparency, both for MWBEs who apply to the program as well as primes who must comply with the program. Each business applying for MWBE certification pursuant to 2-c section must agree to allow the NYS Department Tax and Finance to share its tax information with the NYS Department of Labor to share its tax and employer information with the Division. In addition, the new legislation requires all waivers to be made public on both ESD’s website and on the contracting agency’s website. That transparency of financial data needed for certification along with the publication of waivers will increase the transparency of the certification and good faith effort processes.

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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		Elizabeth Velez The Velez Organization

End Note
As the current Article 15-A approaches its sunset, the new legislation will likely open doors wider to new opportunities for MWBEs and primes alike to consider completing new projects in new ways that consider how procurements are designed and let and how new relationships are formed. It will also impact government agencies and authorities who can now design procurements that provide greater opportunities for MWBEs to perform as prime contractors.

The success of the new MWBE program will hinge on the collaboration of government and the private sector – both prime and MWBE – to work together to bring practical solutions to the construction industry that must continue to grow over the next several years for New York State to maintain its competitive edge regionally, nationally and globally.

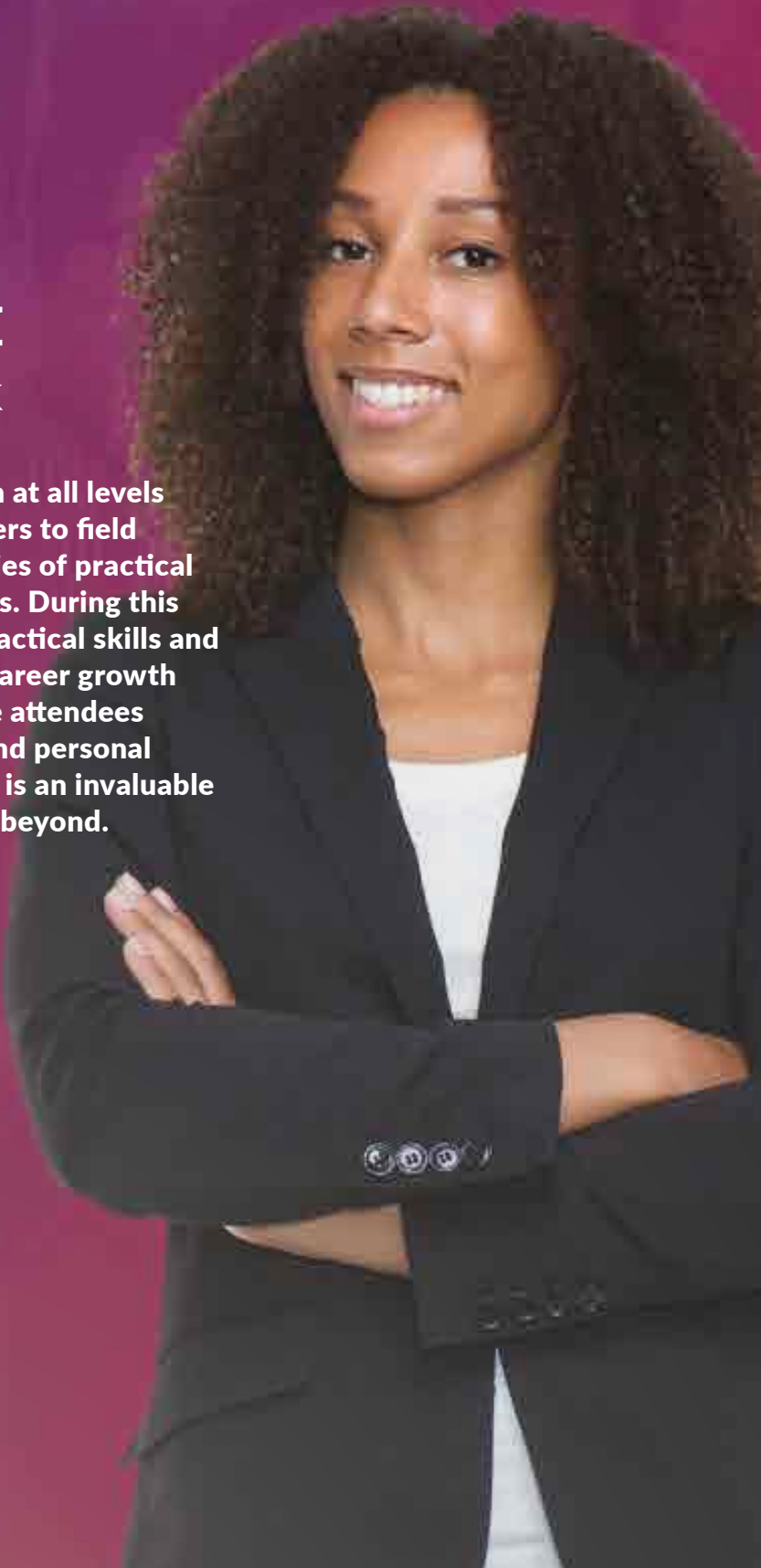
WBC encourages all stakeholders to collectively share their suggestions and ideas to enhance and refine the implementation of the new MWBE program. Through collaboration and consensus, positive changes will be achieved to increase effective MWBE participation in the New York’s construction industry, one of its key economic engines.

2020
AIM

Friday, March 20, 2020 | City Tech

ACT • INSPIRE • MOTIVATE
A New Leadership Playbook

AIM is a one-day forum that will enable women at all levels of leadership – from CEO and mid-level managers to field professionals and students – to engage in a series of practical workshops and action-generating conversations. During this event, attendees learn leadership strategies, practical skills and new ways of thinking about their present and career growth in the building industry. AIM’s goal is to engage attendees in the process of designing their professional and personal leadership plan. The take-away from this event is an invaluable one – a practical growth strategy for 2020 and beyond.



To learn more visit: wbcnyc.org/aim2020



A New Standard in Diversity Goal Setting

AXI System Advances Search Efficiency, Data Validity and Reliability

“

AXI has been a great partner to SUNY. AXI customized its platform to meet SUNY’s unique process and needs across 30 campuses, 20 auxiliaries, and hundreds of contracts. Now, SUNY is able to manage compliance and achieve goals faster and with fewer resources.”

PAMELA Y. SWANIGAN, M.P.A.
Director of University-wide Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Program
State University of New York

“

AXI has taken construction goal setting and good faith efforts from a multi-day process to less than an hour.”

JUSTIN NIGRO
Vice President
Westchester Hill Contracting

As many procurement professionals in the public and private sector may know, the first and sometimes hardest obstacle in compliance is finding the right people for your projects – and then reaching them. Equally as daunting to certified firms is the influx of bidding opportunities and solicitation emails, especially when it may be on the opposite spectrum of the services they perform.

With this challenge in mind, AXI software was developed with New York institutional clients to manage their diversity contracting. The tailored systematic process provides equal opportunity, helps build capacity and reduces some of the frictions inherent in State contracting by utilizing innovative technology to connect certified firms with the companies and public sector agencies and authorities that want to work with them.

Ensuring Comprehensive Inclusion

AXI’s automated software provides inclusion of both MWBE and SDVOB firms, while its **Identify-Connect-Report** process minimizes the risks and the time costs involved in ensuring each available diverse firm is given equal opportunity to compete on every project.

For public organizations, this identification phase is typically executed during their contract-specific goal setting phase. For private firms, it takes place at the beginning of their good faith efforts. However, different market participants using the public MWBE directory often find different results when looking for the same contractors. In the end, not every available certified MWBE is provided the equal opportunity to compete for every project. Only standardizing the regulatory guidelines into an **Identify-Connect-Report** software process ensures comprehensive inclusion on every project.

Identifying the Potential Partnership

In the Identify phase, AXI software auto-unbundles contracts to find the right MWBE partners for each scope using a unique industry code map, custom market areas strategies and enhanced business data. Cost estimates are uploaded and unbundled into individual scopes of work. Those are correlated into their appropriate industry codes for

commercially useful functions and the unique market area requirements are applied. Final work-specific exclusions and filters can be applied, with searches at every step documented for future review and to support good faith efforts.

Ensuring Consistency to Maximize Efficiency

The importance of using the right industry codes is underscored by how only 10.1% of the MWBE Directory firms are identified using NAICS codes alone. To ensure consistency, AXI developed an industry code map that uses all available codes (NAICS + NIGP + CSI) to convert each scope of work into its official commercially useful functions. On average, each has nearly six industry codes assigned across all the available code sets.

The unique geographic sensitivity of each scope is a product of the type of work required and its dollar value. Some things are geographically insensitive and can be sourced from anywhere, while others must come from locally-based businesses. Likewise, high value opportunities can be sourced from a wide geographic area, while smaller ones would only attract local vendors or contractors.

Refining the Search Method

Regional search options are fine for many trades, but too often the politically drawn boundaries often meant that firms located close to the job site but across a regional boundary were not being excluded. Sometimes relying on firms’ state work regions can lead to suboptimal results. AXI developed additional search strategies for hybrid regions, county-level searches and a unique customizable radial search strategy.

The radial search has been important in providing the flexibility required for the geographically sensitive trades. With the project site defined, the radius can be set according to the unique business realities of the work required and the reasonable distance, e.g. the drive time. While in Long Island that may be 25 or 30 miles, in the North Country it may be 75 or 100. In the end, final search results can be further refined into the most accurate list of available partners. To help inform this, AXI has collected additional public data records on past participation, business size, licensing, and bonding. Tools are available to filter and provide justifications for exclusion if needed.

The Next Step for Strategic outreach

After the right pool of MWBEs has been identified, integrated good faith efforts outreach tools connect with those firms. Public and private buyers can issue campaigns from simple notifications to full requests for proposals or quotes to find their partners. The consolidated workflow eliminates the risks that otherwise exist when managing process across Excel spreadsheets and emails. The final statistics, response rates, and bids further support the capacity justifications and identify areas or targeted improvement.

As a result of many improvements to the goal setting process design and the value of an integrated technology, AXI System has launched a tailored systematic process that provides equal opportunity, helps build capacity, and reduces some of the frictions inherent in State contracting. AXI has been developed to respond to New York State goal setting, outreach and compliance requirements and has already been adopted by several New York State clients.

According to Pamela Y. Swanigan, M.P.A. Director of University-wide Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Program at the State University of New York, “AXI has been a great partner to SUNY. AXI customized its platform to meet SUNY’s unique process and needs across 30 campuses, 20 auxiliaries, and hundreds of contracts. Now, SUNY is able to manage compliance and achieve goals faster and with fewer resources.”



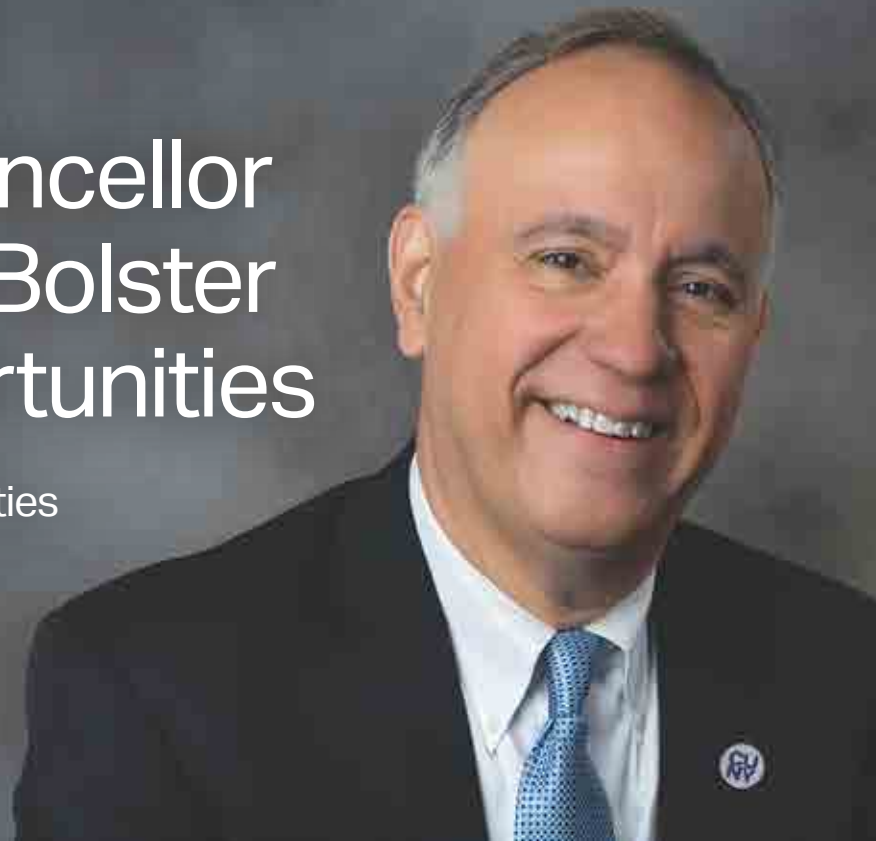
AXI System, founded by Max Mangin, a technologist and former venture capital professional, offers comprehensive goal setting, outreach and compliance services to New York State’s public and private sector clients.

To learn more about the program, please visit: www.axisystem.com or email info@axisystem.com

New CUNY Chancellor Unveils Plan To Bolster Business Opportunities

for Firms Owned by Women, Minorities and Service-Disabled Veterans

FÉLIX V. MATOS RODRÍGUEZ
Chancellor
The City University of New York



New Leadership at CUNY Brings Positive Change to Diversity Programs

“CUNY and CUCF are working harder than ever to provide opportunities to MWBE and SDVOB vendors, and we are fully confident that Chancellor Matos Rodríguez will deliver on his goal of making CUNY’s MWBE and SDVOB program a model for other institutions of higher learning around the country.”

WILLIAM C. THOMPSON
Chair, Board of Trustees
The City University of New York

Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez announced the first phase of a strategic plan for increasing The City University of New York’s engagement with Minority and Women-Owned Businesses (MWBEs) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned businesses (SDVOBs) at the CUNY and City University Construction Fund’s (CUCF) annual Conference on Contract Opportunities for companies owned by minorities, MWBEs and SDVOBs at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

“I enthusiastically support the Chancellor’s ambitious vision for strengthening our partnerships with MWBEs/SDVOBs and reaffirming CUNY’s commitment to diversity,” said Board of Trustees Chairperson William C. Thompson Jr. “Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, CUNY and CUCF are working harder than ever to provide opportunities to MWBE and SDVOB vendors, and we are fully confident that Chancellor Matos Rodríguez will deliver on his goal of making CUNY’s MWBE and SDVOB program a model for other institutions of higher learning around the country.”

“When I was appointed Chancellor earlier this year, I began discussions with many members of the CUNY Board of Trustees and my senior team to create a concrete plan regarding the University’s MWBE and SDVOB efforts,” said Chancellor Matos Rodríguez. “We all agreed that as the country’s most diverse public higher education institution, CUNY needed to accelerate participation. These efforts will help inspire more people of color, women and service-disabled veterans to directly participate in our vibrant University community and help make CUNY an even more inclusive institution. We thank Governor Andrew Cuomo for his support and for helping us create a MWBE and SDVOB program at CUNY that will become a national model of excellence.”

The CUNY/CUCF conference offered insight to prospective MWBE and SDVOB partners on how to do business with CUNY and to provide a forum for networking with CUNY decision-makers. The symposium drew 1,100 attendees, an increase over last year’s attendance of 900.

Additional information on the conference may be found at www.CUNYbiz.com

CUNY’S New MWBE Plan

Chancellor Matos Rodríguez laid out the following policies to bolster CUNY’s MWBE and SDVOB program at the conference’s Plenary Session. These will be implemented, effective immediately:

- **The “Plus-Three” initiative:** This will require CUNY colleges to obtain a minimum of three responses from New York State-certified MWBE and SDVOB firms for all applicable procurement opportunities, ensuring the access of traditionally underrepresented firms to CUNY’s opportunities.
- **Expanding the Mentor-Protégé Program:** CUNY plans to bolster its mentor-protégé program, where large businesses take MWBE and SDVOB firms under their wing and provide training and on-the-job learning to accelerate the firm’s development. The University has already seen positive results with the industrial supply company Grainger and Edge Electronics and is now working to enlist additional companies to expand this program.
- **Enhancing the informal purchasing threshold:** Recent changes to New York State Law have created a new threshold of \$500,000 for informal purchases when targeting New York State-certified MWBE and SDVOB firms. The new threshold begins in January 2020 so the firms will be receiving larger contracts. CUNY colleges will be encouraged and monitored on their utilization of the enhanced informal purchasing threshold.
- **Expediting the internal procurement review:** Procurement reviews will be fast-tracked for informal procurements targeted to New York State-certified MWBEs and SDVOBs for purchases valued at or less than \$250,000. Companies will begin their work, obtain orders and finish the project faster and, most importantly, get paid faster as a result.
- **Reducing the number of exclusions:** CUNY plans to scale down the number of exclusions for various commodities and services, creating new opportunities for industries and areas that traditionally have not seen MWBE and SDVOB participation. Coupled with CUNY’s initiative to expedite the procurement process, this will open up new contract opportunities for MWBEs and SDVOBs.
- **Unbundling Contracts:** The CUNY Office of Budget and Finance will be reviewing all single and sole source justifications to unbundle contracts whenever possible to drive additional MWBE and SDVOB participation and strengthen subcontracting goals for small businesses.
- **Student Opportunities:** The University is creating a point of access for MWBE and SDVOB companies to facilitate the hiring of CUNY students, first as interns and then as full-time employees.
- **Accountability:** Part of the University’s annual presidential reviews will consist of MWBE and SDVOB assessments to make sure the colleges are on track and meeting these targets.
- **Growing Real Estate Options:** Real estate represents a new area of opportunity at the City University Construction Fund (CUCF) for certified MWBEs, as both primes and subcontractors. As the University explores various real estate initiatives, CUNY will need appraisers, brokers, specialized financial, legal and real estate professional services. CUCF is building 21st century campuses that incorporate state-of-the-art facility design and construction. Its capital construction program contributes hundreds of millions of dollars each year in new construction, facilities renovation and critical maintenance projects that support the University’s mission.



The City University of New York is the nation’s leading urban public university. Founded in 1847, CUNY counts 13 Nobel Prize and 24 MacArthur (“Genius”) grant winners among its alumni. CUNY students, alumni and faculty have garnered scores of other prestigious honors over the years in recognition of historic contributions to the advancement of the sciences, business, the arts and myriad other fields. The University comprises 25 institutions: 11 senior colleges, seven community colleges, William E. Macaulay Honors College at CUNY, CUNY Graduate Center, Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies, CUNY School of Law, CUNY School of Professional Studies and CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy. The University serves more than 275,000 degree-seeking students. CUNY offers online baccalaureate and master’s degrees through the School of Professional Studies. For more information on procurement opportunities, visit: www1.cuny.edu/sites/selltocuny



The City University Construction Fund (CUCF) is the core of CUNY’s capital construction program and is responsible for more than 300 buildings across 25 colleges and professional schools. CUCF is a public benefit corporation established by New York State to provide facilities for CUNY and to support its educational purposes. CUCF advances design, construction and development projects for new facilities, capital build-out, real estate brokerage and legal services and for the ongoing renovation of existing facilities. CUCF’s MWBE and SDVOB contracting opportunities are or will be available at all tiers: prime contracting, subcontracting, sub-subcontracting, and suppliers in architectural design services, engineering services, construction management/build services, general contracting, trades contracting and a full range of real estate and property development services. For more information on opportunities visit: www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/fpcm/cucf/procurement

How DASNY Continues to Change the Diversity Procurement Paradigm



"DASNY thinks outside of construction. From architecture and engineering, to financial services, legal and risk management, we want to engage certified firms across all DASNY business units."

MICHAEL M. CLAY
Senior Director, Procurement and Opportunity Programs Group
DASNY

With 75 years of service to New Yorkers, the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) has grown into one of the largest financiers and builders of social infrastructure facilities in the United States. The nation's leading issuers of tax-exempt bonds and a major financier of capital infrastructure across New York State, DASNY provides financing and construction services to public and private colleges and universities, hospitals, state and local governments, and other not-for-profits.

A keynote of DASNY's business model and culture is the engagement of Minority and Women-Business Enterprise (MWBE) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business (SDVOB). DASNY sets participation goals for public clients and requires all contractors, consultants and vendors to use qualified MWBE and SDVOB firms for all procurement projects. The Opportunity Programs Group reviews every MWBE utilization plan to ensure MWBE participation on projects and reaches out to prime contractors who may need additional MWBE firms to meet their goals. No contract can be awarded without an approved Utilization Plan, and no contract can be closed out with the approval of the Opportunities Programs Group.

Leading the Industry to Push Utilization Past Construction
Historically, the focus on New York State's diversity initiatives have been on the construction industry, but DASNY, who has executed more than \$20 billion in transactions, saw an opportunity to engage the MWBE and SDVOB community in other market sectors. "DASNY thinks outside of construction," said Michael M. Clay, the Senior Director, Procurement and Opportunity Programs Group at DASNY. "From architecture and engineering, to financial services, legal and risk management, we want to engage certified firms across all DASNY business units."

The shift in focus began with a push for legislative change. Clay worked with partners in the public and private sector to include the financial and banking industry in Executive Law Article 15-A. The Emerging Investment Managers Bill (S.6888/A.9976) was passed in 2010 under Governor David Paterson, which addressed entities that were not executive agencies and controlled large pools of money for investment such as the Comptroller, the State Insurance Fund and the Deferred Compensation Board, among others. This legislation also provided emerging investment managers with the ability to invest with MWBE financial institutions and to adopt a strategy that motivates investments in underserved regions of the State.

DASNY also looked for creative ways to increase MWBE participation in non-traditional areas such as risk management. Because of their construction portfolio, DASNY needed to select a firm for their general liability insurance. An area that is traditionally dominated by larger and more established firms, DASNY wanted to get creative with the procurement to provide an entry point for certified firms. According to Clay, "We released a procurement where we required an MWBE broker to be the lead broker. Our goal was to engage a larger national firm to support the certified company. The outcome was a great success, and for the first time in DASNY's history, an MWBE insurance broker is the lead broker for a general liability insurance procurement."

Integrating Procurement and Diversity: The New Frontier for Contract Inclusion
Throughout its decades of operation, DASNY continues to be recognized for their innovative initiatives that have been strategically created to increase MWBE and SDVOB participation. From its award-winning Statewide Surety Bond Training Program to discretionary purchasing, DASNY recognizes the importance of thinking outside of the box. So, what's ahead on the frontier of procurement? Former DASNY President & CEO Dr. Gerrard Bushell, who recently left DASNY to take the position of Executive Chair at Carlyle Airports Group, decided to integrate the Procurement team and Opportunity Programs Group, by creating two co-leaders of Procurement: J. Matthew Moore, Director of Procurement, and Michael Clay, Senior Director of Procurement and Opportunity Programs.

"Procurement is the foundation of an organization," said Dr. Bushell. "By creating institutional collaboration between our team of procurement and diversity professionals, we have streamlined the access certified firms will have to contract opportunities." From staff meetings, to reviewing contracts that are ready to be released to bid or closed out, there is direct integration and collaboration between the team that works one-on-one with MWBEs and SDVOBs and the individuals at DASNY who select contractors. DASNY advances a system that opens up communication and removes red-tape or misunderstandings that can occur in complex public sector procurements.

"As a co-leader of procurement, I work with Michael Clay and we both utilize our expertise to create contracts that engage a diverse set of certified contractors/vendors, while still provide cost-effective and best in class services to our clients, said Matthew Moore. "Utilizing this paradigm, we learn where the intersecting points of procurement are and that sets a tone from top to bottom that our organization is committed to diversity at every level," added Clay.

Small Acts of Courage



ALEXANDRA M. GREENE
President and Founder
AMG Strategies

If anyone would have told me two years ago that I would voluntarily leave three, well-paying positions with reputable organizations in less than two years, I would be shocked. Friends and family would describe me as a practical, risk-adverse realist. You see, I was raised in a small, rust belt city in upstate New York, where leaving a good job to pursue a dream, without tangible next steps, is a foolish and unaffordable luxury.

So, why did I do it? I have learned that the values that are instilled in us, especially women—work hard and; don't complain, it could be worse; put in your time—was creating resentment and toxic energy that was affecting my personal and professional relationships. Instead of staying the course, I decided to channel and repurpose that energy to build up the courage and self-awareness to trust my instincts to make a bold change. A necessary change.

While searching for a full-time job, I decided to focus on my passion – creating opportunities for marginalized communities. I am investing my time and energy into building out AMG Strategies, a company that I created in 2018, while keeping an open mind to job opportunities that come my way. While this may sound ideal to some, every day is a rollercoaster ride of emotions, never-ending to-do lists, and **small acts of courage**.

Brené Brown defines “ordinary courage” as the ability to “speak honestly and openly about who we are and about our experiences—good and bad. Speaking from our hearts.” As entrepreneurs, small acts of courage are the seemingly infinite and at times mundane tasks and sacrifices that allow us to accomplish larger goals. They are also any task or decision that forces you to step outside of your comfort zone to accomplish a larger goal. This could be asking your current or former boss for a reference or reviewing your LinkedIn network to identify graphic designers to hire to help build a website for your new business.

Alexandra M. Greene is a strategist, mobilizer and policy advisor, with more than 15 years of effective management and executive leadership experience. She has turned her experience, expertise and wit into a new enterprise, AMG Strategies, a social impact firm which provides clients with support in community engagement, corporate social responsibility, government relations and thought leadership.

Here she examines her personal strategies for creating professional success through small acts of courage by being positive, patient, and present.

For more information on new firm, visit: www.amgimpact.com

Practicing Small Acts of Courage: The 3Ps

I like to use a three-prong approach that I refer to as the “3 Ps: Being Positive, Patient, and Present” in practicing and being more aware of the small acts of courage that help me reach my goals. The 3 Ps are interconnected; you really cannot have one without the others.

1 Be Positive

We are our thoughts. We become our thoughts. Even if our negative thoughts are just our perception, I think we can all agree that perception is reality. Therefore, if your thoughts are negative and do not support a vision of you accomplishing your goals, then you'll never be successful and achieve your goals. Being positive is all about perspective and keeping it through the ups and downs that each day brings us. The following tips help me keep a positive attitude daily:

- **Gratitude.** Start every morning writing one sentence stating one thing, person, or occurrence that you are grateful for. If you miss a day, or two, or three, then write down two, three, or four gratitude statements to catch up. If you're not into writing, that's okay. Thoughts of gratitude work as well and can happen at any time of any given day.
- **Self-care.** Self-care isn't necessarily about spa treatments, vacations abroad, or a pricey fitness membership. Self-care does not have to be intricate, complicated, or expensive. It really is just being kind to yourself through intentional acts like reading, journaling, complimenting yourself or meditating.

2 Be Patient

This is difficult. Most of us either feel like we're running out of time to accomplish a goal or are literally out of time because a deadline already passed. But, for the most part, our inability to be patient is due to preconceived thoughts and narratives we've created about ourselves, which all too often becomes our reality. Whenever I start to get anxious about where I should be in my career or begin to replay professional failures and missed opportunities, I do my best to remind myself to:

- **Forget self-imposed timelines and performance-based markers.** I am exactly where I am supposed to be in my career and life in general. And, where I am is pretty amazing considering where I started because there is a lesson to learn and gift to gain with every experience, good or bad. Period, full-stop.
- **Stop comparing myself to others.** I cannot compare myself to anyone else because my personal and professional journey are just that, my own. My journey is unique to me and filled with abundance and prosperity. As President Theodore Roosevelt explained, “comparison is the thief of joy.”

3 Be Present

Whenever, I have negative thoughts and need to practice being positive or I am upset that something is not happening when I want it to, I have to become present to shift gears from one mindset to another. Simply put, you cannot be positive or patient without presence or the practice of being present. When we are present, we are thinking about where we currently are, who we may be with, and what we are currently doing or need to do. Since it's the most important P, it also happens to be the most difficult. I use the following tools and resources to stay present daily:

- **Organization. To-Do Lists.** Create monthly and daily to-do lists designed to meet your quarterly and annual business goals. It's easier said than done, but also keep track of each list throughout a given month and day, respectively. You'll be amazed at how much you accomplish. Similarly, if you're searching for a new role or project, then organize your network in a way that helps you prioritize who you need to contact, why, and when.
- **5 Second Rule (the Rule).** Created by motivational speaker Mel Robbins, the 5 Second Rule is a simple tool that helps us motivate and get things done. On her blog, Robbins explains: “[i]f you have an instinct to act on a goal, you must physically move within 5 seconds or your brain will kill it. The moment you feel an instinct or a desire to act on a goal or a commitment . . . count 5-4-3-2-1-GO and move towards action.” Incorporate the Rule or another anti-procrastination tool into your daily routine. When you get stuck or are just having a bad day, use the Rule to motivate and start working on a task. The task can be anything, just start somewhere.
- **Trust your gut.** Your intuition will never lie to you. Never. If your gut is filled with butterflies and you're thinking that a recent job offer or new project is not in your best interest, listen! Take time to figure out why your “spidey senses” are going off. Is it fear of the unknown because you are new to the role and/or the client? Or could it be the compensation is too low and their is no opportunity for negotiation? The former is normal and a good sign. The latter may pose a real and insurmountable barrier to accepting the offer. This is okay; there will be more offers at your desired compensation.
- **Make decisions based on courage, not fear.** Easier said than done but try not to make any important decisions off the cuff or because you think that the opportunity won't be available tomorrow or the day after. Always give yourself at least 24 hours before committing to anyone or anything. If it is meant for you, it will be there once you've had time to make a clear and conscious decision to accept.
- **Celebrate small wins.** Whether it's getting out of bed without hitting the snooze button or drafting and sending an email request for coffee/lunch to pitch to a former colleague. Celebrate every single task you complete throughout the day. Your celebration does not have to be elaborate. Your celebration could be a smile of gratitude for finishing the task or an internal acknowledgement (self-talk) that you have one less item on your to-do list.

¹ <https://melrobbins.com/blog/five-elements-5-second-rule/>

Back to the Bronx

Lourdes Zapata on her next chapter at SoBRO and the bright future for the South Bronx

In July 2019, it was announced that after years of working in public service Lourdes Zapata, who for almost two years served as New York State's Chief Diversity Officer, was leaving the Governor's office. Following the departure of Alphonso David, who served as Counsel and a close advisor to Governor Cuomo, shifts throughout New York State's key leadership positions were expected, leading us to think, what's next for Zapata?

Before her appointment as Chief Diversity Officer in February 2018, where she worked on policy and legislation related to diversity and inclusion efforts throughout the state, Zapata served as Executive Vice President and Executive Director of the Division of Minority and Women's Business Development at Empire State Development (ESD). ESD serves as the economic development arm of New York State government as it creates programming and initiatives that are dedicated to attracting businesses and talent to New York. In her role at ESD, Zapata oversaw the Governor's MWBE Program and focused on creating and expanding opportunities for businesses owned by women and minorities.

A Passion for Community, Built on a Mother's Entrepreneurial Spirit
Prior joining the State, Zapata served as Senior Vice President of Community and Economic Development for the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBRO), where she recently returned as its newest President and CEO. In fact, Lourdes laughs as she states that it's actually her third time working at SoBRO – a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in the South Bronx where she was born and raised. She said "I'm back, and it feels great to come home." She continues, "The work I've done and now get to continue to do at SoBRO is incredibly powerful and rewarding. I'm thankful that I am afforded the chance to empower this community through knowledge building, skills, development and economic opportunity."

Zapata also notes that she came back to SoBRO because of her connection with the South Bronx. She said, "I am inspired by this job because it motivates me as a professional on a personal level." She added, "I see my family and myself in a lot of people we serve here, and that's what drew me back."

When it comes to her family, Zapata is referring to her mother, who owned and operated a neighborhood hair salon in South Bronx. She recalls how her mother's salon served as a home base for the community, where customers gathered from early morning to late night. "A Latina woman owning her own business in the South Bronx is already a unique individual, but during the 1970s, Latina business owners were true pioneers," she said. "She was the neighborhood hair-dresser, building a business from the ground up, working with clients and handling the day-to-day operations. That's when I saw the power of economic opportunity and the impact small businesses can have on the communities they serve."

Growing up in the South Bronx, Zapata also sees herself in the young people that look to SoBRO for support. "Whether people in our community are coming to get information on

education and training, or alternatives to traditional schooling – they are striving to better themselves and the conditions of their families. In the 70s, it was my mother who pushed and inspired us all to do better – we saw her struggles, her aspirations and pride as an entrepreneur."

When Opportunity Builds Upon a Neighborhood's History: The Next Phase for the South Bronx
One of SoBRO's core missions is to address the aspects of community and economic development in the South Bronx. Alongside small businesses assistance, job readiness training and youth programming, the organization is also committed to creating affordable housing and commercial spaces.

"We engage and are supportive in development that respects the heritage and community of the South Bronx, while advancing our neighborhood's access to opportunities, technology and quality of life," said Zapata. "If I look out my office window, I can see at least four large-scale development projects under construction now. We aren't saying growth is bad, but we want to ensure that people aren't getting priced out of the community they've called home for generations, and that we are also protecting what made our community great to begin with – its people."

It's important to note that Zapata isn't new to real-estate development and the challenges that can be brought on by gentrification. She previously served as the Director of the Department of Planning and Development for the City of Newburgh, and in her previous position at SoBRO, she developed and managed over 750 units of affordable and special needs housing scattered throughout the South Bronx and Harlem. She also led SoBRO's planning efforts during the rezoning of Third Avenue and Brucker Boulevard and the brownfield redevelopment planning in Port Morris and Eastchester. To sum her lessons learned into one statement "Responsible development can be a terrific tool to support the larger community good."

On Staying Inspired

In a world with constant overstimulation, how do you stay focused and inspired?

It's the little things. I try to focus on the human perspective of every project – from start to finish. For example, I met a young man who received his HSE (High School Equivalency - formally known as a GED) through SoBRO. He's going to Courtland Community College in the fall, and he will be the first in his family to receive a secondary education. Empowering people through education is one step to helping that individual, and their entire family, head towards a new path of opportunity and success.

Finding a Work-life Balance

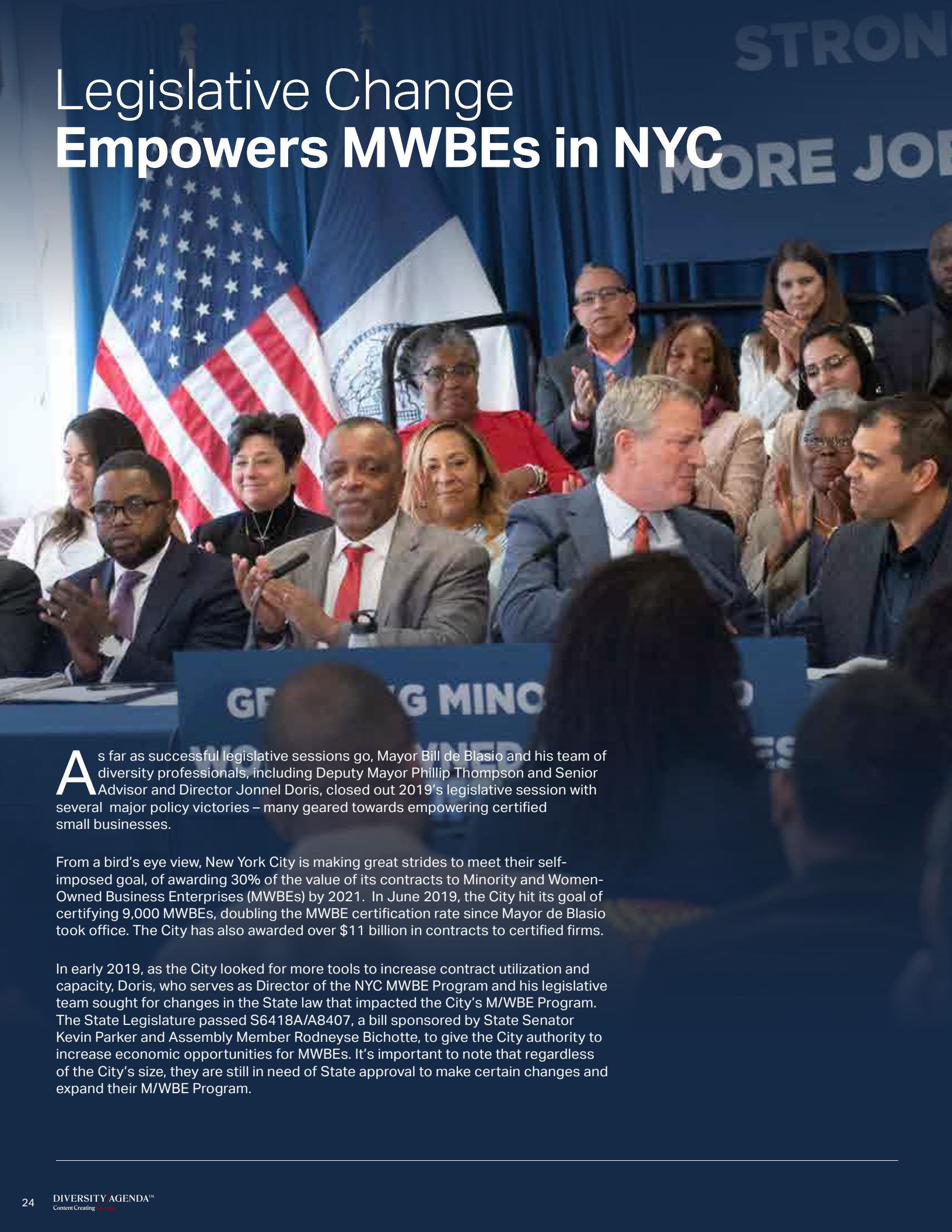
How do you balance your home and professional life and feel equally fulfilled?

I grew up with a working mother and my kids have always had a working mom. Being a mom and a woman who has a career outside the home are both critical and important parts of who I am – and my children understand that. I've brought my kids to work with me since they were little and they know my colleagues – many of whom have become great friends over the years. But when I'm working on a Sunday, they remind me that if it's not an emergency, it's time to disconnect. They're my partners and help keep me in check.

What I'm reading/listening to?

I'm a news junkie. I'm always listening to news podcasts - "Morning Joe", "The Daily", "60 Minutes" – the New York Times' "Arguments." I have a long commute, so chances are I'm listening to a podcast on current events. Given the state of affairs in our nation it's more important than ever. But when it comes to leisure reading, I love Steven King novels – something about the mystery and how humans connect to each other under unimaginable situations. And to get the blood pumping, I love music. My kids will tell you my palate hasn't expanded past the 80s and 90s R&B, hip hop and old school salsa. Earth, Wind and Fire, Biggie, Luther Vandross, Big Daddy Kane, El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico, Hector Lavoe and Marc Anthony - I love the classics.

Legislative Change Empowers MWBEs in NYC



As far as successful legislative sessions go, Mayor Bill de Blasio and his team of diversity professionals, including Deputy Mayor Phillip Thompson and Senior Advisor and Director Jonnel Doris, closed out 2019’s legislative session with several major policy victories – many geared towards empowering certified small businesses.

From a bird’s eye view, New York City is making great strides to meet their self-imposed goal, of awarding 30% of the value of its contracts to Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs) by 2021. In June 2019, the City hit its goal of certifying 9,000 MWBEs, doubling the MWBE certification rate since Mayor de Blasio took office. The City has also awarded over \$11 billion in contracts to certified firms.

In early 2019, as the City looked for more tools to increase contract utilization and capacity, Doris, who serves as Director of the NYC MWBE Program and his legislative team sought for changes in the State law that impacted the City’s M/WBE Program. The State Legislature passed S6418A/A8407, a bill sponsored by State Senator Kevin Parker and Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte, to give the City authority to increase economic opportunities for MWBEs. It’s important to note that regardless of the City’s size, they are still in need of State approval to make certain changes and expand their M/WBE Program.

Building Relationships and Finding a Common Goal
When tasked with the goal of creating and passing a legislative agenda, Doris noted some of their tools for success: “We had a clear objective, the support of our executive leadership and the foundation of good relationships we built in Albany.” He added, “We were given the resources we needed to succeed by the Mayor, and the MWBE community really supported us in getting this bill passed.”

Key Legislative Changes

Changes to New York City Law

- Update and increase Citywide goals
- Include Native American-owned and controlled firms to NYC MWBE Program
- Re-establish goals for Asian American-owned firms in the Professional Services category
- Revise the maximum cap on goods contracts that MWBE goals may be applied from \$100,000 to \$1 Million
- Enhance oversight measures for agencies and MWBE officers

Changes to New York State Law

- Increase discretionary spending threshold for MWBE procurements of goods and services from \$150,000 to \$500,000 at city agencies.
- Enable the New York City Department of Education and the New York City School Construction Authority to spend up to \$500,000 in discretionary awards with MWBEs for the purchase of goods and services .
- Establish authority for a mentorship program at New York City Department of Design and Construction
- Establish authority for pre-qualified MWBE lists

It Takes a Team





Diversity Agenda is celebrating the next generation of leaders creating change in the diversity market and beyond. As part of our core mission, we are committed to continuing the dialogue on the future of inclusionary practices, gender equality and the presence of women and minorities in American's board rooms and leadership positions.

An imperative part of that conversation is how the next generation is approaching diversity differently than the generations before them. Our industry's new game-changers are resetting the historical norms, shaking up initiatives and programming and raising the bar for results higher than ever been before.

For information, visit:
www.diversityagenda.com/nextgen

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN INFRASTRUCTURE

Demand Drives Organizational Growth



As infrastructure needs across the US grow in urgency, so does the need for a talented pool of young leaders to help support and drive the infrastructure industry. In this environment, the importance of organizations like the Young Professionals in Infrastructure that support and foster new talent continues to rise.

What began a few years back as a collection of individuals involved in public-private partnerships on the East Coast, has seen growth across the United States in the wide range of sectors across the infrastructure space.

Young Professionals in Infrastructure (YPI) was founded in late 2015 by representatives of several institutions that are active in the infrastructure industry, and the alternative delivery space specifically. Since then, the organization has grown significantly.

The organization now has over 30 organizational members across the public and private sectors. 2019 has seen a large growth in the organization's public sector membership in particular: YPI now has seven public sector organizations that are active members, including the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey. YPI has begun to focus increasingly on bringing together the public and private sector, and knowledge sharing between both sectors of employees regarding difficult issues related to increasingly more complex infrastructure transactions. Since its beginning, YPI has maintained a focus on alternative delivery methods and innovative ways of thinking about infrastructure delivery, and despite the organization's expansion, this core focus hasn't changed.

Promoting Diversity from Various Perspectives

Part of YPI's efforts to foster a new generation of successful, inspiring leaders has been driven by its increasingly active Diversity, Inclusion & Workforce Committee. This Committee, and YPI generally, remain committed to driving increased diversity and inclusion among those working in the infrastructure space, across all industries. The Committee is in its second year and is now headed by Leslie Jacomino of Winston & Strawn. "The Committee and YPI are committed to promoting the future generation of leaders in infrastructure and cultivating

an inclusive industry culture that recognizes and appreciates talented contributors of all backgrounds. It is not just about diversity for diversity's sake – diverse and inclusive teams are critically important to the delivery of successful projects," maintains Jacomo.

Other members of the Committee have also shown their commitment to diversity, both through YPI events and initiatives, and through their work outside of YPI.

"September 15th kicked off National Hispanic Heritage Month in the US. It's a great time to gain a deeper appreciation for the ongoing contributions of Latinos in the US. Diversity is essential to creating a collaborative environment that nurtures and promotes solutions for future business and societal challenges. Every leader should be committed to advancing the critical conversation about creating more inclusive environments," said Wilson Vega-Ortiz of Marsh, a member of the Committee and co-chair of YPI's Membership Committee.

Jackson Murley of Shearman & Sterling, also an active member of the Committee, added: "It's been an honor to serve as co-chair of Sterling Pride (Shearman & Sterling's LGBTQ inclusion network) over the past five years and be a member of YPI's diversity committee. Promoting all kinds of diversity and creating an inclusive community in the legal services and infrastructure sectors has been a passion of mine throughout my career. Given the fundamental importance of infrastructure in everyone's daily life, we need to ensure that professionals in the infrastructure sector, whether in legal, engineering, finance, insurance or otherwise, appreciate and reflect the diversity of the communities we work in and serve."

Through bringing together emerging leaders who are actively promoting diversity and inclusion from a variety of different perspectives, YPI promotes

vibrant discussion of related topics through monthly calls and organizing events in partnership with other industry organizations focused on diversity. Discussions within the Committee have turned to how best to translate these discussions into tangible actions in the coming months and years.

A New Focus On Workforce

In 2019, the YPI membership also made the clear the necessity to make workforce issues front and center. Sarah Bennett, who serves as Program Manager for Economic Development & Opportunity for the City of Denver, and also is a member of the YPI Diversity, Inclusion & Workforce Committee, emphasized this, stating: "More and more cities across the nation are recognizing the need to ensure infrastructure projects economically benefit the communities in which they are built. Simultaneously, firms are confronting a tight labor market and are looking at ways to creatively attract and retain the next great hire. To that end, YPI's Diversity, Inclusion & Workforce Committee is focused on looking at ways to partner with local community workforce development efforts to augment our work and support greater diversity and inclusion within our sectors."

Moving Forward

YPI's Diversity, Inclusion & Workforce Committee is collaborating with various other organizations within the industry to produce webinars and other informative presentations regarding diversity and workforce issues. Additionally, the Committee is consulting with YPI's membership regarding diversity initiatives across organizations and is focused on recognizing and promoting individuals within YPI's membership for outstanding contributions to diversity within their fields.

For information about YPI, visit: www.ypinfrastucture.com

Accessible Dispatch

Empowering New Yorkers with Disabilities through Mobility

The Accessible Dispatch Program is changing the way New York City residents and visitors with disabilities are commuting across all five boroughs!

The definition of diversity is dynamic, expanding from historical categories of race, gender, sexual orientation and age to include accessibility. New York City's Taxi & Limousine Commission and MTM's Accessible Dispatch Program are changing the paradigm for wheelchair accessible transportation solutions in New York City

Accessible Dispatch launched in 2012 to provide New York City residents and visitors greater access to wheelchair accessible taxis in Manhattan. In 2017, the New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC) partnered with MTM to expand the TLC's Accessible Dispatch Program to all five boroughs, which incorporated green taxis into the program. The increased coverage and higher volume of green and yellow wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) has provided individuals with disabilities additional options for transportation—allowing passengers to access the city like never before.

"While New York City's public transit system functions for many, people with disabilities face daily challenges due to the lack of accessibility, particularly where wheelchair access is concerned. Accessible Dispatch changes that completely. Whether a passenger is securing a reliable ride to a doctor's appointment or sightseeing in fast-paced New York City, Accessible Dispatch makes getting around easier, faster and more convenient," explained MTM's Accessible Dispatch Program Manager Crys Cooper.

Where Can We Pick You Up?

Accessible Dispatch's on-demand booking system provides passengers with a variety of user-friendly options. Passengers can access WAV taxi services by calling the dispatch center directly at (646) 599-9999 or by dialing 311. Accessible Dispatch also provides tech savvy commuters and travelers with the option to secure rides via the Accessible Dispatch mobile app (search "WAV Taxi" in the app store) or website at <https://mtm.ridewithzoom.com/#/booking>. Once rides are confirmed,

as part of the program's door-to-door service, the closest available WAV taxi is sent directly to the passenger's pick-up location. Drivers are trained to appropriately assist the passenger into the vehicle using the ramp, and drivers are also prepared to secure the passenger's mobility device using the vehicle's wheelchair securement system. Once the final destination has been reached, the driver helps the passenger exit the vehicle to get them safely to the curb.

"The Accessible Dispatch Program is more than just a cab service. It is about putting WAV options into the hands of our valued passengers, helping them develop a deeper sense of independence. In a city like New York that is universally known for its diversity and inclusion, it is important that individuals with disabilities also be a part of the conversation," stated Steven Williams, MTM Community Outreach Trainer.

Drivers are Part of the Accessibility Formula

Accessible Dispatch's growth is also credited to the drivers who go the extra mile, from providing stellar customer service, to performing necessary safety protocols, to ensuring an excellent rider experience. This does not go unnoticed by Accessible Dispatch and the TLC. To show appreciation for these unsung heroes, the TLC recognizes drivers at their annual Honor Roll event, and Accessible Dispatch has implemented incentive programs to reward exceptional drivers. For example, veteran TLC driver Baris Kaynaroglu was recently recognized as the July Driver of the Month, a prestigious recognition within Accessible Dispatch. Baris sets an incredible example to his peers and

serves as an inspiration to others. Additionally, he feels that Accessible Dispatch genuinely cares about his well-being as a businessman on wheels.

"First of all, I like helping people who use wheelchairs. Besides, the bad thing about other programs is, if the passenger cancels or doesn't show up, we don't get anything. There is no money and your time is wasted. But the good thing about Accessible Dispatch is that I am sure I won't waste my time, I can earn good money, and I can help people as well. When I am out of Manhattan, I can drop passengers to other boroughs. Usually it is difficult to get ride on the way back, but with Accessible Dispatch, I get rides from other boroughs as well, and I get to make extra money," Baris explained with his award in hand.



From dedicated drivers to a robust, tech savvy new way to book a WAV ride, Accessible Dispatch is revamping the way the disabled community travels around New York City! To learn more, visit: www.accessibledispatch.com.



How Women Veterans Can Change New York City's Construction Industry

Hudson Meridian Launches
"Women Veterans in Construction" Initiative

A New "M" Factor in Construction Industry Talent Development



BY RICHARD COTE, LTC. RET.
Executive Vice President
Hudson Meridian Construction Group



"If we are going to continue to build prestigious and complex projects, it is imperative to engage the women who have served our country and utilize their invaluable abilities to help us build New York."

New York City is home to some of the world's most historic and complex projects. As we continue to build, the construction industry has been faced with the obstacle of locating and retaining skilled labor, qualified mid-tier staff, such as estimators, project managers and experienced executive leadership.

During the building boom, like many of the country's leading construction services firms, Hudson Meridian included internal initiatives to address these challenges in our long-term business plan that focused on talent development and retention programs, to provide consistency and high-quality services to our clients. Part of this plan included a strategic decision to diversify our staff and subcontractors, regularly exceeding the Minority, Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) goals set forth by New York City and State and the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses (SDVOB) goals included on public sector contracts. This intentional shift towards diversity has transformed our corporate culture and increased our ability to deliver quality projects for our clients, on-time and within budget, while supporting individuals who have selflessly served the United States of America.

Growing Together with MWBEs

As Hudson Meridian expanded its private sector client base and portfolio, we increased our efforts to locate talented, skilled and certified contractors. Our team continues to develop long term relationships with highly skilled MWBEs. Hudson Meridian found itself fulfilling goals and developing relationships with subcontractors who provided professional services, innovative solutions and a more diverse perspective. Soon, we were hiring these firms for private work based on their expertise and merits, not just their certification. These skilled subconsultants are now included in opportunities to provide resources for private sector work as well.

This level of involvement was key to a shift in our corporate culture. Instead of just checking a box for a diversity requirement, we connected and found firms that shared our values and commitment to our clients – creating a greater sense of friendship and team engagement. Today, we can't imagine developing future projects without the partnerships we have created with these certified small businesses.

The 'M' Factor: Military Training and Mindset Create Successful Construction Leaders

Hudson Meridian has successfully partnered with the WBE Engineering firm, Enovate, on numerous projects. Among the highly skilled and capable employees from Enovate who impressed our project team at Hudson Meridian, one stood out to me. She was concise, prompt, intelligent and had exceptional communication and team orientation skills. I wasn't surprised to learn that she was a veteran. Her professionalism, grit and dedication reminded me of the women I had met during my 28 years of service in the United States Army.

For those of you who haven't had the pleasure of working with a veteran, they are typically equipped with the foundational values perfect for the construction industry. Selfless service for our country develops a rigorous work ethic built on the basis of mutual respect; tardiness or absenteeism is not an option. Through their robust training, veterans have the instinct to take initiative and create plans that deliver tangible solutions. Veterans take naturally to a team environment and understand the necessity of shared responsibility, credit and hardship.

The positive experience we have had with WBE's and the women veterans they hire led our company to realize something I know to be true – we need more women veterans in construction. When presented with the opportunity, our firm hires veterans and veteran-owned businesses (SDVOB's) for the value they bring to our company and the clients we serve. The diverse perspectives and skillsets women bring to the table, combined with the training and instincts instilled in veterans, will set the precedent for the next wave of professionals ready to step in and assist construction services firms with getting the job done right. If we are going to continue to build New York's prestigious and complex projects, it is imperative to engage the women who have served our country and utilize their invaluable abilities to help us build New York.

A New Diversity Talent Initiative: Women Veterans in Construction

To further these efforts, Hudson Meridian is proud to announce that we have created Women Veterans in Construction (WVC), an initiative designed to connect women military service veterans with employment opportunities in the construction industry. From workforce, to mid-tier and senior leadership, we are asking our industry's leaders, elected officials and veteran and women's organizations to assist us in creating this dialogue. Soon, Hudson Meridian will be hosting a roundtable discussion and enlisting the assistance of our industry partners and friends to further WVC's mission and increase the pool of talented and exceptional construction professionals.

Today, more women are joining and retiring from the military than at any other point in our nation's history. At Hudson Meridian, we ask you to join us in opening doors to work with our women veterans to ensure our industry and the individuals we employ are as diverse as the communities we serve.

If you are interested in learning more about WVC or becoming a part of this important dialogue, please email wvc@hudsonmeridian.com or call 212-608-6600.

ABOUT RICHARD COTE

Rich Cote serves as Executive Vice President of Hudson Meridian Construction Group, one of country's leading private construction management firms. Cote oversees the firm's public sector division, including all waterfront and infrastructure projects. From 2012 to 2017, Cote left Hudson Meridian to serve as the Director of Operations for the Asset Management division of the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), where he managed a large portfolio of capital construction projects, including the implementation of the citywide ferry system and efforts related to the recovery from Hurricane Sandy. Cote is a graduate of Valley Forge Military Academy, Manhattan College and the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College. He is a retired U.S. Army officer and served three tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, earning two Bronze Stars, which are awarded for meritorious achievement in a combat zone. He retired at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.



ABOUT HUDSON MERIDIAN

Hudson Meridian Construction Group (HM) is a leading construction services firm offering a unique combination of construction expertise, including construction management, program management and general contracting. A trusted partner for new construction and restorative projects, HM has extensive experience in the residential, cultural, health and continued care, marine and educational sectors. The firm is also known for its team of disaster preparedness and disaster response experts, as they brought together a team of engineering and construction professionals to manage all aspects of the 9/11 World Trade Center recovery and debris removal. HM is well versed in LEED certification projects and green technologies, having completed multiple new buildings that have achieved LEED Silver or higher ratings.



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