

THE DAILY REPORTER

Business partners help minority, women owners get foothold on state transportation construction industry

By: Ethan Duran October 7, 2022 10:41 am

A local construction organization and a business development center are teaming up to help underserved business owners access Wisconsin's transportation construction industry.

Construction Business Group's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Development Initiative will partner with the Wisconsin Small Business Development Center to help women and people of color starting their own small businesses to bid on state road and highway projects, CBG officials announced.

The SDBC Capital Access Clinic at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire provides business and financial planning to new owners, while CBG provides a master class with information on the certification process.

Joe Davis Sr., CBG's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise development director, meets with owners one-on-one, develops bankable goals with them and helps entrepreneurs submit their application for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise certification from the Department of Transportation. The initiative helped 15 businesses get their Disadvantaged Business Enterprise certification from WisDOT since September 2021, he added.

In turn, growing DBE's capacity helps the transportation department meet its goals for federal funding. The DBE program set a national goal of placing at least 10% of federal highway and transit funds with people who qualify as disadvantaged small business operators, WisDOT's website said. The program started with the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982.





“The way we see it in the industry, the DBE builds capacity,” Davis said. “We’re making sure these small businesses are utilized.” Being able to grow a small business also creates generational wealth, he added.

Nicolas Hawthorne, the owner of N.H. Construction in Milwaukee, said he met with Davis when his company started in 2021. He said the advice he got from CBG led his business to grow rapidly, and he has a better understanding of the state transportation construction market because of it.

“My goals were always to start my own company and work for myself, to be the best at what I do,” Hawthorne, who started working on asphalt as a teenager, said. “While my goals are still the same, they have been accelerated.”

Through the challenges of starting a business from the ground up during the pandemic, Hawthorne received his DBE certification with Davis’ help. Hawthorne said he would take CBG’s master class in the winter.

The Capital Access Clinic also shows owners how to manage their cash flow, understand insurance and build a workforce, Davis said. Vincente Alfaro, owner of Alfaro & Sons Contractors in Kenosha, needs capital to purchase equipment to prepare construction sites.

Alfaro is working with the clinic to get access to the money he needs to grow his business, CBG officials said. He also received his DBE certification, and said the initiative gave him the guidance, mentorship and training he needed to create good paying jobs.

The SDBC’s clinic has served 380 clients and resulted in \$12.5 million in capital investments in 2022, clinic officials said.

While the transportation builders industry has high upfront capital needs, the SBDC helps entrepreneurs maneuver and get funding needed to help their business flourish, Capital Access Clinic’s Financial Consultant Alia Carroll said.

“The SBDC Capital Access Clinic financial consultants can help these disadvantaged businesses navigate the ins and outs of obtaining private financing and open doors into the transportation industry,” she added.

Not only are the CBG and SDBC working on this initiative, but other prime contractors were at the table when helping small businesses, Davis said. He gave a nod to companies like Payne and Dolan and Northeast Asphalt, both part of the Walbec Group, and labor unions like the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 139.

“We have a year’s worth of success underneath our belt,” Davis said.

Tweet

Share 0

Share

Save

Tagged with:

ALFARO & SONS CONTRACTORS

CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS GROUP

N.H. CONSTRUCTION

WISCONSIN SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

ABOUT ETHAN DURAN



Ethan is the construction and development reporter at The Daily Reporter. He can be reached at (414) 551-7505 or eduran@dailyreporter.com.



RELATED ARTICLES



Proposed changes to Davis-Bacon Act spark debate amid infrastructure spending

🕒 May 18, 2022
12:30 pm



Enbridge picks Michels affiliate for reroute of Line 5 pipeline

🕒 January 19, 2022
1:13 pm

Evers vetoes bill to provide tax break for apprenticeship tuition

🕒 December 3, 2021
3:47 pm

