

Mississippi Program Spotlight

Carolyn Bell, Civil Rights Director – Mississippi DOT

Skill Building for Construction and Professional Services DBEs

(MDOT sets goals on both construction and professional services contracts)

Construction Management Class

MDOT launched the first class of this kind sponsored by the DOT. This class targeted construction firms and consisted of 15 DBEs of various crafts and various lengths of service and brought in industry experts to give them the knowledge needed in those critical business areas.

Over the next 8 weeks, 2 days per week, 3 hours per night instructors covered the following; but not limited to, workman's comp, OSHA standards, bonding & insurance, construction accounting, joint ventures, strategic alliances, etc. As well as covering the basics on navigate MDOT's letting system. This program, paid for largely through the DOT was above and beyond the business development program required and administered under our DBE Supportive Services Program.

We continue to follow up with group with additional opportunities to grow such as setting up virtual prime networking sessions on a monthly basis. Our goal is to keep the lines of communication open so we can continue to be a resource to them as they take their business to the next level. We fully expect increased contract participation as a result of our investment.

Mentor Protégé Program

In order to give our consultant DBEs access to those same critical business skills we set out to develop a Mentor Protégé program targeted specifically to consultants. Our former Executive Director and our current Acting Executive Director were instrumental in getting commitment from our consultant community to ensure the success of this program.

A Committee was formed that included the Office of Civil Rights and other disciplines that rely on the services of consultants to develop a realistic program with measureable results. Once DBE Consultants and Prime Consultants have been vetted through the approved process, they are placed on our website for matchmaking, once a DBE is paired with a consultant, they get together to develop a work plan to be approved by the agency complete with measureable outcomes and milestones, there is a memorandum of understanding between the DBE, consultant and MDOT. Unfortunately, at this time, I cannot speak to the success of the program, but not for lack of optimism from those we intend serve but due to COVID restrictions we have been unable to fully rollout as planned. So, I say stay tuned for the next update, this is a developing story.

That concludes MS report.