

# Diversity Gains in Transportation Contracts

By Jared Bray

*Editor's note: This New York City model for diversity gains in contracting can also be useful for other jurisdictions, entities, and small businesses.*

New York City's Department of Transportation awarded a third of its contracts to minority- and woman-owned businesses last year, a priority of Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez.

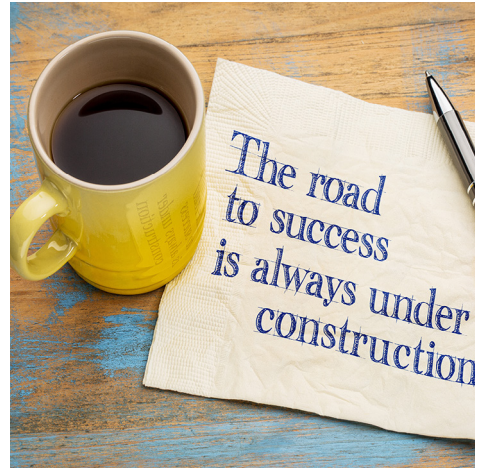
A lot of the work that governments pay for is actually carried out by private contractors. And some governments, especially big cities, have labored for years to diversify their pool of suppliers and contractors, with the goal of spreading the largesse to more communities and preventing the same big companies from getting all the work. It can be slow progress, given the need to put contracts out for competitive bids and build a pipeline of certified Minority- and Woman-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBES) that are qualified to do city work.

But in the last three years, the New York City Department of Transportation has drastically

increased the share of its contracts that go to MWBEs. The department awarded 32 percent of its total contract spending in fiscal year 2024 to MWBEs—up from 24 percent in 2023 and 11 percent in 2022. The department has awarded 407 contracts worth a total of \$432 million to MWBEs in the last three years.

Part of the reason for the increase is Ydanis Rodriguez, a former city councilmember who was named transportation commissioner by Mayor Eric Adams. Rodriguez, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, says that diversifying the contractor pool helps the department's spending do more good in more communities, and can help build buy-in for its projects.

The department has taken advantage of the city's "small purchase" program, which allows contracts of up to \$1.5 million to be offered only to MWBEs. Rodriguez has also emphasized getting the message out in community and ethnic media to spread the word about contract opportunities. The effort is part of a larger focus on diversity in contracting from the Adams administration.



Governing recently spoke with Rodriguez about supporting MWBEs, helping promote new ones, and diversifying the contractor pool, along with Carlos Bannister, the assistant commissioner and chief contracting diversity officer for the NYC

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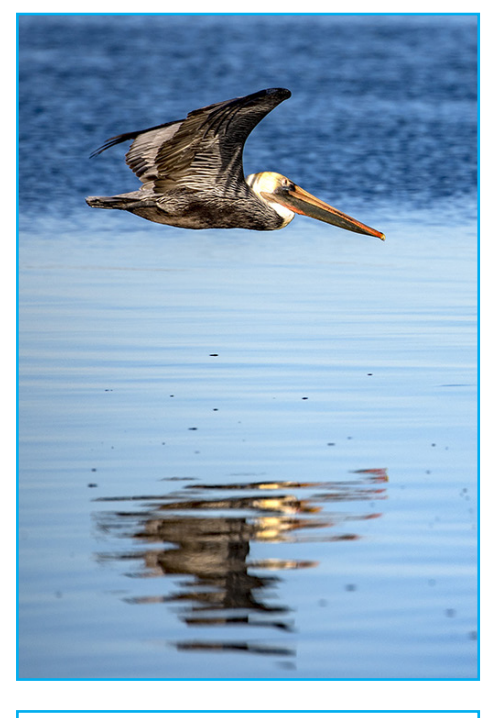
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Contact: Klassi Duncan, 504-620-9647, [kduncan@urbanleaguela.org](mailto:kduncan@urbanleaguela.org)  
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