



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
James Sanders Jr.

Sanders Brings MWBE Procurement Fair to SE Queens

JAMES SANDERS JR. November 30, 2017



Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) Chair of the NYS Senate Task Force on Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises hosted an MWBE Procurement Fair on Wednesday, November 29, 2017 at the Raddison Hotel JFK. It was an all-day event extending from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. and was followed by a complimentary dinner.

The procurement fair was particularly timely, given the \$10 billion rebuild of JFK Airport, which will provide extensive economic opportunities for MWBE contractors in the Borough of Queens and throughout the New York Metropolitan Region. LaGuardia Airport is in the midst of a \$4 billion revamp that began in June 2016 and is expected to be completed by 2021.

Increasing the utilization of MWBE firms in state contracting is key to the success of the MWBE program. In 2014, Governor Cuomo set the nation's highest goal for MWBE procurement at 30 percent.

"If you can get a contract, we have several banks here that you can sit down with, who are willing to say right then and there, here is the financing we can offer you," Sanders said.

"That is a major portion of this, to ensure that the MWBE community participates in the process. We are talking about America being America for everybody. At the end of the day this is about making sure that there is an even playing field."

The Procurement Fair aimed to provide businesses with information about opportunities for MWBEs at JFK and Laganardia airports. It also served as a way to ensure the continued fairness and transparency of the procurement process. By hosting multiple agencies under one roof, attendees had direct access to staffers and could ask questions regarding upcoming opportunities.

The attendees, which consisted of small and large business owners were able to speak one-on-one with the vendors at the fair, which included banks and lending institutions, as well as various agencies. Several workshops were also available at the event which covered subjects such as contracting and capital, accessing capital, personal and banking accounts, and services offered by the Queens Economic Development Corporation.

In the workshop hosted by Elaine Powell-Belnavis, an economic development specialist with the Small Business Administration (SBA), she explained the services offered by the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), and other resources as well.

The SBA works across federal agencies to award at least 23 percent of all prime government

contracting dollars to small businesses with specific goals for: small disadvantaged businesses, women owned businesses, service-disabled, veteran-owned or businesses that are historically located in Underutilized Business Zones.

"This is an excellent opportunity for you to do work with the federal government," Powell-Belnavis said. "When you deal with the federal government, you're dealing with the big boys. There is no reason for you to approach federal contracts with an 'I don't know attitude', because we have so many areas in which we train people. You need to know the rules and regulations of the game."

Another workshop, hosted by Brianna Brandon of TruFund Financial Services, discussed how the company known as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), offers an alternative to banks and shark lenders, as a way to access capital. In some ways, its regulations are not as stringent as banks. For example, whereas banks require a credit score of 700 - 750+, TruFund will accept a minimum score of 600. It considers a number of factors when lending such as - how much money do you need, how long will it take you to repay, and can you estimate your estimated revenue for 2018.

Other participants in attendance at the event were: LaGuardia Gateway Partners, SKANSKA, New York Construction Alliance, Port Authority of NY and NJ, National Association of Latino State Chamber of Commerce, New York State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, New York State Women's Chamber of Commerce, Queens EDC, New York State Association of Minority Contractors, and Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation.