



THE COMPETITIVE
EDGE
CONFERENCE

30
YEARS

CUNY GRADUATE CENTER

JULY 17, 2024

THE LIGHTHOUSE AT CHELSEA PIERS

SEPTEMBER 12, 2024

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MENT • FINANCE • TRAINING • OPP
ORTUNITIES • PROCUREMENT • PART



THE REGIONAL ALLIANCE
FOR SMALL CONTRACTORS

CONGRATULATIONS

The Regional Alliance for Small Contractors
congratulates the 2024 Competitive Edge
Conference Awards Gala recipients!



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Zenaida Rodriguez, Executive Director

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WELCOME

On behalf of the Competitive Edge committee, I'd like to welcome everyone to the 30th Anniversary celebration of the Annual Competitive Edge conference. Since its inception, this historic event reflects on the initiatives and significant strides made on creating opportunities for MWDBEs and SDVOBs throughout the years.

Our conference increases awareness and the value of small businesses and their inclusion in major projects with our agencies and prime contractors. Throughout the years the participating agencies unhesitatingly have utilized this platform to share opportunities for growth through networking, training platforms, access to finance and procurement.

Today, I would like to thank our sponsors, panelists, and exhibitors who have contributed their unwavering support in joining us this year. Let me just say that while these programs are a vehicle for success, we continue to stay committed to this effort that will assist and contribute to the economic growth of this community. Small businesses are the economic engine that make it happen. We have a long way to go!

Congratulations to all our awardees this year. Tonight, we celebrate you with a warm and sincere appreciation of your hard efforts. We'd like to thank our advocacy partners and our community partners for their support in continuing to build a platform that integrates our community through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

All the best,



Zenaida Rodriguez,
CE Committee Chair



THE COMPETITIVE EDGE COMMITTEE

Thank you to all of our
committee members

REGIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SMALL CONTRACTORS

Zenaida Rodriguez
Kamaria Aubry
Grace Cepeda
Brandon Washington

NEW YORK POWER AUTHORITY

Eric Alemany
William Choi
Lourdes Martinez

NYC SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY

Suzanne Veira
Ricardo Rivera

NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE OF MWBE'S

Michael J. Garner
Michelle Robles
Migdalia Taveras

DORMITORY AUTHORITY STATE OF NEW YORK

Justin McLaughlin-Williams
Cher Parker

THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

Anthony Miller
Luis Linares

BATTERY PARK CITY AUTHORITY

Jahmeliah E. Nathan
Jennifer Yan

NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LA Dunn

NYS INSURANCE FUND

Elvis Perez
Damaris Torres

PSEG LONG ISLAND

Jimmy Alty

NYC DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

David Coreas

NYC HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Cindy Estrada

CUNY

Ali Banks

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Terrence Byerson
Giselle Guerrero
Christine Norman

OFFICE OF THE NYS COMPTROLLER

Nancy Hernandez
Bruce M. Girigorie

CRESCENT COMPANIES

Anthony Peterson

NYC DEPARTMENT OF CITYWIDE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Elizabeth Brown



NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

July 17, 2024

Dear Friends:

Please accept my best wishes as you gather to celebrate the 30th annual conference of the Competitive Edge Committee and honor exceptional business leaders and entrepreneurs.

For 30 years, the Competitive Edge Committee has encouraged and guided compelling conversations to help attendees forge important connections. This annual conference builds on the committee's history of helping minority- and women-owned small businesses connect with city and state agencies while also providing opportunities and knowledge to business owners in order to thrive.

I want to extend my congratulations to this year's honorees, whose leadership and business acumen should make you proud of well-deserved accolades.

By working collaboratively and supporting business owners from a wide variety of backgrounds, Competitive Edge Committee is an invaluable community partner in helping ensure a rising economic tide truly does lift all boats.

Best wishes for a successful conference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl E. Heastie".

CARL E. HEASTIE
Speaker





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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

GREGORY W. MEEKS

5th DISTRICT, NEW YORK



July 17, 2024

RANKING MEMBER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL
INSTITUTIONS AND MONETARY POLICY

Dear Friends,

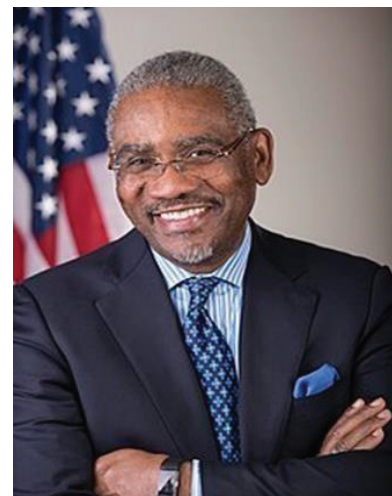
It is my pleasure to extend best wishes for the Regional Alliance Competitive Edge Committee's 30th Annual Conference. Since 1990, the Regional Alliance for Small Contractors (RASC) has played a major role in boosting the growth of small, minority, women, disadvantaged and local business enterprises in construction and associated industries in NY and the tri-state region.

This year's occasion will highlight essential goals for the minority and small business community in the areas of "Finance, Training and Access to Contracts". The Committee will also honor dedicated individuals who have a proven track record in supporting small, minority, and women owned business firms. Congratulations to all the honorees!

On behalf of the more than 780,000 residents of the Fifth Congressional District of New York, I thank the Regional Alliance for Small Contractors and the honorees for their steadfast commitment to the advancement and development of our communities in a fair, equitable manner.

With warmest regards,

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress
Fifth Congressional District of New York





OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
New York's 13th District

July 17, 2024

The Competitive Edge Committee
CUNY Graduate Center
365 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dear Friends,

Congratulations to The Competitive Edge Committee in recognition of your annual conference and another successful year of service and engagement throughout our community. The Competitive Edge Conference promotes projects and development targeting minority and small businesses throughout the tri-state region, and your dedication to supporting small, minority, and women-owned businesses in New York's 13th congressional district has not gone unnoticed.

The Competitive Edge Committee was established to provide business leaders with a networking platform consisting of vital information, resources, and support through training and development and your efforts are commendable. Our community is forever grateful for your continued service, dedication, and support of small, minority, and women-owned businesses, which are the foundation of our communities.

Thank you for your tireless endeavors, commitment, and efforts in support of small, minority, and women-owned businesses throughout the region and work to encourage the professional growth and development of our neighborhoods and the businesses that help them thrive.

Sincerely,

Adriano Espallat
Member of Congress





THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
ADRIENNE E. ADAMS
SPEAKER



July 17, 2023

Dear Friends:

As the first Black Speaker of the New York City Council, leading its first-ever women majority, I am delighted to welcome everyone to the 2023 Competitive Edge Awards Gala.

This special event is among the highlights of the two-day Competitive Edge Conference, the premier gathering for minority-owned and women-owned businesses seeking growth and development. Since 1993, it has connected these diverse entrepreneurs with leading agencies, offered valuable resources and opportunities, and supported job creation, economic growth, and innovation across the nation. Every participant is a catalyst for positive change.

The theme for this year's conference, "Bridging the Gap from Equity to Equality," is one that deeply resonates with the New York City Council. Throughout this session, we have put equity and equality at the heart of all our work. Your presence at this event is a testament to your commitment to this shared vision of forging a brighter future where fairness and justice prevails for all.

I commend the Competitive Edge Committee, their partners, and all of the attendees who have made this annual event such a success.

Congratulations as well to this year's honorees.

May this occasion ignite your passion, inspire new connections, and empower you to grow and to continue succeeding.

Have a wonderful time!

Sincerely,

ADRIENNE E. ADAMS
Speaker



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY



RODNEYSE BICHOTTE HERMELYN
Assemblymember 42nd District
Kings County

MAJORITY WHIP

CHAIR, Subcommittee on
Oversight of Minority & Women-Owned
Business Enterprises (MWBE)

COMMITTEES
Education
Governmental Operations
Health
Higher Education
Housing
Ways and Means

July 17, 2024

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to congratulate the **Competitive Edge Committee** on their **30th Annual Competitive Edge Conference and Service Awards Gala**. Celebrating three decades of this Annual Conference is a major milestone, reflecting the Competitive Edge Committee's longstanding commitment and continued dedication towards uplifting minority-and women-owned businesses.

Held annually since 1993, the Competitive Edge Conference is an empowering event - rich in resources, knowledge, and opportunities for Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs), and aspiring MWBEs. The Competitive Edge Committee - comprised of leaders from the Regional Alliance for Small Contractors (RASC) and executives from NY City and State Agencies - is continually breaking barriers for MWBEs to obtain more contracting opportunities. And the Conference is an invaluable opportunity for small businesses to connect with government agencies seeking their services, hear from experts in the field to further understand and improve their business outcomes, and share experiences with fellow entrepreneurs through networking.

The Competitive Edge Conference has flourished as an excellent platform to promote growth and opportunity, and this milestone year is certainly no exception. The 2024 Competitive Edge Conference's theme of "*Finance, Training and Access to Contracts*" provides insights on essential business practices and opportunities for the MWBE community to foster a more equitable business environment. As MWBEs continue to face disproportionate roadblocks to success, the resources and opportunities provided are pivotal for MWBEs to thrive on a more level playing field.

As Chair of the New York State Assembly's Subcommittee on Oversight of MWBEs, I am committed to addressing and eliminating these disparities through the New York State MWBE Program; working with businesses, organizations, and agencies as well as introducing and passing legislation. I am honored to work with the Competitive Edge Committee, and I commend all involved for our mutual dedication towards uplifting MWBEs.

I wholeheartedly congratulate the honorees of the 30th Annual Competitive Edge Conference and deeply thank the sponsors for their support.

Sincerely,

Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn
42nd Assembly District



TAYLOR DARLING
Assemblywoman 18th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

COMMITTEES
Children and Families
Economic Development, Job Creation,
Commerce and Industry
Local Governments
Small Business
Transportation

July 17, 2024

I am delighted to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the distinguished honorees of this year's Competitive Edge Conference. For the past three decades, this esteemed event has stood as a beacon of opportunity, visibility, and growth for minority and small businesses across the tri-state area. It is with immense pride that I celebrate your outstanding achievements and contributions to this vibrant community.

The Competitive Edge Conference, through its collaborative efforts with city and state agencies, authorities, and corporations, has consistently showcased the potential and prowess of minority and small businesses. By providing a robust platform for marketing, promotion, and recruitment, it has opened doors to procurement opportunities, enabling these businesses to thrive and expand their reach.

Since its inception in 1993, the CE committee has been unwavering in its mission to empower business leaders with the tools and resources needed for success. The conference's commitment to offering vital information, resources, and training has been instrumental in fostering a dynamic and inclusive business environment. This year's honorees exemplify the spirit of excellence and innovation that the Competitive Edge Conference seeks to nurture.

As we celebrate your accomplishments, let us also acknowledge the invaluable support and guidance provided by the Competitive Edge Conference. The networking opportunities, resources, and training offered through this platform have been crucial in shaping the success stories we honor today. Your journey and triumphs are a reflection of the collective efforts and vision that this conference embodies.

Congratulations once again to all the honorees. Your success is a powerful reminder of the incredible potential that lies within our diverse and dynamic business community. I look forward to witnessing your continued growth and impact in the years to come.

All My Best,

Assemblywoman Taylor Darling
NYS District 18

THE COMPETITIVE
 **EDGE** **30** YEARS
CONFERENCE

A LOOK AT OUR 2024 CONFERENCE DAY

Since 1993, The Competitive Edge Conference has been the premier event for minority-owned and women-owned businesses looking to grow, develop, and take their businesses to the next level.

Over the years, we have connected thousands of diverse suppliers with leading agencies, providing them with access to valuable resources, contracts, training, and networking opportunities. Through our efforts, we have helped to drive economic growth by over \$500 million dollars, creating jobs, and supporting entrepreneurship in communities across the country. The Competitive Edge Conference is a truly inspirational event, bringing together business owners, agencies, government officials, and industry leaders from across the country. Our focus is on creating opportunities for underrepresented businesses to thrive, grow, and succeed, and we take pride in our role as a catalyst for positive change.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

8:00 AM

REGISTRATION

Breakfast & Networking

9:00 AM

OPENING REMARKS

Zenaida Rodriguez, Conference Chair

9:15 AM | SESSION 01

EXECUTIVE PLENARY SESSION

Prime Opportunities for Small Businesses

10:00 AM | SESSION 02

ACCESS TO CAPITAL & FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Are you Ready, Willing and Able?

11:00 AM | SESSION 03

EXPANDING PARTICIPATION OF EMERGING INVESTMENT MANAGERS

12:00 PM

LUNCH & NETWORKING

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

1:1 REAL PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1:00 PM | SESSION 04

THE POWER OF THE PIPELINE:

Market Insights and Business Pipeline of Infrastructure in New York

2 PM | SESSION 05

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: M/WBEs TAKING FLIGHT

A Case Study about Diversity in Contracting
at the JFK Redevelopment Program

MARKETPLACE

Stay Competitive at The 2024 Competitive Edge Conference Exhibitors Marketplace. Learn more about industry-leading products, services, and business technologies.

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Alpha Fire Sprinkler Co.

Armand Corporation

Avatar Tech

Battery Park City Authority

BOC Capital Corporation

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City University of New York/Facilities
Planning Construction Management/
City University Construction Fund

Dormitory Authority State of New York

Dragados-Picone-Schiavone

Energetix

Empire State Development

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Haydan Consulting Inc.

Holt Construction

JFK Millennium Partners, LLC

Long Island Power Authority

Loxme Group, Inc.

Mayor's Office of Contract Services

Metropolitan Transportation Authority

New Terminal One

New York City Department of

Small Business Services

New York City Housing Authority

New York City Public Schools

New York City School Construction Authority

New York Economic Development Corporation

New York Power Authority/

New York State Canal Corporation

New York State Insurance Fund

Office of the New York State Comptroller

PKA Technologies, Inc.

Ponce Bank

PruTech Solutions, Inc.

R.F. Wilkins Consultants

Regional Alliance for Small Contractors

Skanska USA

State University Construction Fund (SUNY)

Stellar Services

TDX Construction Corporation

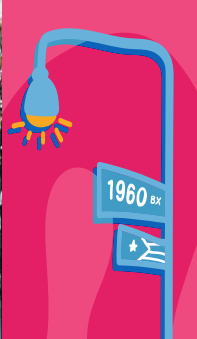
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OPENING REMARKS



ZENAIDA RODRIGUEZ

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

REGIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SMALL CONTRACTORS

CE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE CHAIR

As the former Deputy Chief Diversity Officer for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) – Department of Diversity and Civil Rights, Zenaida Rodriguez played an instrumental role in developing and implementing key aspects of the MTA’s Disadvantaged-Minority-and Women-owned Business Programs and its outreach efforts to the business community.

In this capacity, her areas of responsibility were the DBE Certification Program, Operations, Reporting, and MWDBE/SDVOB Community Outreach. With a tenure of over 20 years with the MTA, Ms. Rodriguez assisted MWDBE and SDVOB firms in accessing contracting opportunities and was instrumental in bridging the gap between community projects and the MTA.

Through her coordinated outreach efforts in the recruitment and development of qualified minority firms, the MTA maintained a high level of MWDBE participation. Before joining MTA headquarters, Ms. Rodriguez was the Manager of Workforce Diversity for Metro-North Railroad and responsible for conducting training and promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce of qualified employees. Ms. Rodriguez also provided consultative services to multiple department heads to address EEO-specific and employee-related matters. She also conducted specialized training courses on the agency’s efforts to eliminate discrimination and sexual harassment. Ms. Rodriguez’s experience as Executive Vice President for Administration and Finance in a minority-owned firm has allowed her to understand and work with the many challenges and needs that minority firms encounter daily. In addition to her responsibilities as Executive Director of The Regional Alliance for Small Contractors (RASC), Ms. Rodriguez serves as Chair of the Competitive Edge Conference. The Competitive Edge Conference is spear-headed by a conglomerate of city and state agencies whose mission is to promote up-to-date contracting opportunities and conduct workshops geared towards the minority business community.

During her career, Ms. Rodriguez has received various awards, including The Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce Business and Community Award, Apples in Gratitude Award Through the Manhattan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, a recipient of the New York State Governor’s Harriet Tubman Spirit Award, 2006 Dominican Times Magazine Latina Trendsetter Award, the African American Chamber of Commerce of Westchester and Rockland County Women’s History Month Award, Recipient of the 2007 Hispaniola Services International Women’s Day Award, the 2008 NYS Assembly/Puerto Rican/Hispanic Legislative Task Force MWBE Leadership Award, the 2009-2010 Competitive Edge Conference Distinguished Service Award, the 2013 NYC Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Diversity Award for Hispanic History Month, the Recognition Award for the Society of Indo-American Engineers and Architects, Power Woman of the Year in 2017 and most recently “Mujeres Destacadas 2018 from El Diario La Prensa, 2022 Latin Impact Awards, The Women’s Chamber of Commerce 2019 Women of Excellence, 2022 Trailblazer Award from the NYC Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and 2022 MTA’s recognition of Dedicated Service and Commitment.



SESSION 1 | 9:15 A.M.

EXECUTIVE PLENARY SESSION: PRIME OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

As we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Competitive Edge Conference, top agency executives discuss their perspectives on how businesses can take advantage of opportunities through finance, training and major projects.



MODERATOR

LOURDES ZAPATA **CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER** **METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

Lourdes Zapata serves as the MTA Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, after leading the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, locally known as SoBro. As the MTA's CDIO, Zapata is charged with ensuring equitable access to economic opportunities for Minority and Women Business Enterprises (MWBEs) and eliminating barriers to their participation in obtaining MTA contracts and supporting equal opportunity for MTA employees.

Prior to joining SoBro, Zapata was appointed by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo as Chief Diversity Officer for the State of New York, where she was engaged in policy and program development to increase the participation of women and people of color in all areas of State government. She also served the State as Executive Vice President of the Division of Minority and Women's Business Development at Empire State Development. Her responsibilities included the development and oversight of statewide MWBE procurement policy as required by Article 15A of the Executive Law. She oversaw the Division's certification, compliance and business development activities, and worked with State Commissioners and the Legislature on matters affecting the MWBE community. Her public service also extends to her earlier tenure as Community Development Director for the City of Newburgh in Orange County.

Born and raised in the Bronx, Zapata received her Master's Degree in Public Administration from New York University and her Bachelor's Degree from Hood College in Frederick, Maryland.





ERIC ALEMANY

**SENIOR DIRECTOR, SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT
NEW YORK POWER AUTHORITY**

Eric Alemany is the Senior Director of Supplier Relationship Management at the New York Power Authority. He oversees supplier outreach, development of business opportunity programs and manages relationships with key and diverse suppliers. He drives supplier performance while monitoring supply chain risks that impact the business. In almost 25 years with NYPA, he has held a variety of responsibilities from business development and marketing to project management of the NYPA's clean and renewable energy programs throughout New York State. Mr. Alemany received his Bachelor and Master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering from Manhattan College and has an MBA in Executive Management from Pace University. He is a Certified Energy Manager and is a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the Association of Energy Engineers, Project Management Institute of America, and Design Build Institute of America just to name a few.



MELISSA JONES

**ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT, CONSTRUCTION DIVERSITY
PROGRAMS & CONTRACT COMPLIANCE, MTACD
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

Melissa Jones has 16 years of dedicated service at the MTA and plays a pivotal role in advancing the agency's commitment to diversity and inclusion within the construction industry. Her responsibilities include collaborating with design teams and engineers to identify scopes of services suitable for MWBEs, SDVOBs, and DBEs. Ms. Jones began her career in diversity with the Department of Diversity and Civil Rights subsequently transitioning to MTA Capital Construction, where she gained valuable experience in Law & Procurement. Ms. Jones has enhanced support for the small business community by fostering internal relationships and advocating for diversity. Currently, Ms. Jones works in Operations, supporting the Contracts and Delivery groups to ensure MTACD contract compliance and promote diversity within the contract industry.



MICHAEL J. GARNER

**CHIEF BUSINESS DIVERSITY OFFICER, MAYOR'S OFFICE OF M/WBE'S
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR, CITY OF NEW YORK**

Michael J. Garner, MBA, was appointed New York City's first Citywide Chief Business Diversity Officer by Mayor Eric Adams. Mr. Garner formerly served as Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority for 14 years. During Mr. Garner's tenure at the MTA, he designed the country's leading Small Business Construction Mentoring Program based on dollars paid. Under the direction of Mr. Garner, the MTA's Small Business Mentoring Program awarded 575 contracts totaling \$620 million to program participants. Overall, through his efforts, more than \$17.3 Billion has been paid to New York State certified MWBEs during his tenure at the MTA. By changing City and State legislative Laws and creating new innovative MWDBE/SDVOB programming, Mr. Garner and his teams have been responsible for more than \$23 billion in payments made to New York State/City Minority and Women-owned Businesses.



JASON CLARK

**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, NYS DIVISION OF MINORITY & WOMEN'S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT CORP.**

Prior to joining the Empire State Development Corp., Jason served as Executive Director at Tech:NYC, where he successfully prioritized reducing the digital divide and building a tech ecosystem that works for all New Yorkers. Before Tech:NYC, he was a lawyer at Hamilton Clarke LLP and previously served as First Attorney for the Harlem Regional Office in the New York State Attorney General's Office. Jason also founded DREAMChasers, an organization helping students from underrepresented backgrounds attend New York City's specialized high schools; is legal director of Good Call NYC, an organization that connects arrested New Yorkers with a free attorney; and served as President of the Metropolitan Black Bar Association. He is a graduate of Princeton University and the University of Michigan Law School.



TRACEY MITCHELL

**SENIOR DIRECTOR, CIVIL RIGHTS
GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Tracey Mitchell brings 20 years of experience in diversity programs. Currently, Ms. Mitchell is employed by the MTA, however, splits her time between two State agencies: MTA and ESD. She works on the largest infrastructure projects in the Northeast – the \$4Billion Mario M. Cuomo Bridge, \$1.3Billion expansion of the Jacob Javits Convention Center, the \$1.2Billion Moynihan Penn Station project, \$1.6Billion Belmont Stadium, \$1.7Billion Penn Station Access, \$1.4Billion Long Island Railroad 3rd Track project and the Buffalo Stadium. Additionally she works on the Governor's special projects such as LGA and JFK airport projects and Vital Brooklyn, to name a few. Tracey holds a bachelor's degree in Communications from Herbert H. Lehman College, an MCA from Morgan State University and is a trained arbitrator.

SESSION 2 | 10:00 A.M.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES: ARE YOU READY, WILLING AND ABLE?

Small Businesses fuel the engine of economic growth. Their ability to secure financing necessary to start, grow and maintain their businesses is essential. You will hear from a panel of experts as they outline various small business lending programs available to the minority business industry. This workshop will discuss how to position your company to become ready, willing and able to access financial opportunities with these organizations.



MODERATOR

MADELINE MARQUEZ **EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT** **CHIEF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICER** **PONCE BANK**

Ms. Marquez joined Ponce Bank in February 2017 as a SVP with a mandate to have Ponce Bank become a designated U.S Small Business Administration (SBA) lender and a Certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). Rapidly accomplishing her mandate, she was promoted to Chief External Affairs Officer in 2018. In her expanded role she oversees the CRA Component of the Bank, all Community Affairs activities, CDFI Initiatives, Community Development programming, and the Non-Profit Initiative. Under SBA Initiatives, she led the Paycheck Protection Program with 5,338 applications processed amounting to \$260.5 million and was promoted to become the first Hispanic Woman Executive Vice President for Ponce Bank in September 2022. Ms. Marquez also oversees Government Affairs and serves as the Executive Director of the Ponce De Leon Foundation established by Ponce Bank in 2017. Through 2024, the Foundation has provided over \$2.3 million in grants to community organizations located within Ponce Bank's branch network. Ms. Marquez has received many honors for her role in fueling the growth of businesses and organizations throughout New York, including the "New York Women of Excellence Award in Business" from the NYC Women's Chamber of Commerce; the "Vision Award" and "Business Development Award" from the NYC Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The Bronx Times Reporter named her one of the "25 Influential Women of the Bronx" while The Bronx Chamber of Commerce awarded her their "Leadership Award." Ms. Marquez also received the "Visionary Award" from the Business Initiative Corporation of NY, was named Crain's New York Business 2021 "Notable Women on Wall Street" and received the "City and State Responsible 100" in 2022. The Bronx Chamber of Commerce honored Ms. Marquez with the first "Joseph P. Kelleher Award of Excellence" in 2023 and this March the NYC Hispanic Chamber of Commerce presented Ms. Marquez with the "Financial Leadership Award."





RAFAEL ROGER
PRESIDENT
BUSINESS INITIATIVE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK

Rafael A. Roger is the President of SBA 504 Lending for The Business Initiative Corporation of New York (BICNY), which sponsors the Bronx Economic Development Corporation. Rafael develops SBA 504 loans by connecting with banks and referral sources. Under his leadership, BICNY has been featured in Crain's New York Magazine, ranking third on the "NY SBA Lenders" list and in the "Top SBA Loans" category. BICNY has provided over \$143 million in loans to businesses in The Bronx and New York State, leveraging over \$420 million from banks and private equity investments, creating or retaining over 2,250 jobs as of September 2022. Rafael holds an MBA and BS in International Business Management with a minor in Economics from SUNY Empire State College. Raised in the Bronx, he attended Fordham Prep and is a graduate of the LEAD Fellowship program through George Washington University and the Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute.



MARK BRAZIER
VICE PRESIDENT, MANAGING DIRECTOR, CONTRACT FINANCING
TRUFUND FINANCIAL SERVICES

M. O'Neal Brazier is an economic development professional specializing in the strategic advancement and operational management of mission-driven organizations. He possesses a background in leadership, management consulting and leadership capacity-building in the private, public and nonprofit sectors nationwide. He is experienced in planning and implementing transformational initiatives across multi-faceted institutions of up to \$130M in revenue and 3,500 employees. Mr. Brazier has led grant proposals for up to \$100M and has a proven ability to lead and develop multi-disciplinary teams.



KRISTJAN PRIMA
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, DIRECTOR OF SBA LENDING
PONCE BANK

Kristjan Prima joined Ponce Bank in March, 2024 as Senior Vice President, Director of SBA Lending to help build out the SBA division at Ponce and help small businesses within the banks footprint grow and thrive. Kristjan's goal at Ponce Bank is to give voices to small businesses who can be forgotten – it was the reason the SBA program was created. Prior to joining Ponce, Kristjan was Credit Trained at TD Bank in 2016 and has been involved in SBA for 5+ years as an analyst, Business Development Associate, Business Development Officer. Kristjan is a graduate from West Chester University with a bachelor's in Finance/Accounting. He also holds an MBA in Finance from Saint Joseph's University, and will be graduating Georgetown University with a master's in real estate finance in 2025. Kristjan also serves on the board member for Hope Shed's Light with the goal of creating a community where non-judgmental support is standard.



NANCY VARGAS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DH2 CHAUFFEURED TRANSPORTATION

Nancy Vargas is the owner of the JFK based chauffeured ground transportation provider and has successfully provided ground transportation service in the entire New York Metro Area since 1995. Thanks to Nancy's innovative business strategies, DH2 Chauffeured Transportation has enjoyed continued growth despite regional and national economic downturns. Starting with the diversification into corporate transportation in 2016, Nancy expanded the business into new market segments such as government contracts, airline flight crew, construction mobility, hotel shuttle service, employee shuttle service and corporate events. In 2016, DH2 Chauffeured Transportation became MWBE Certified with The City of New York, The State of New York and The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. She also holds a SBE and DBE with The Port Authority. As an active business community leader, she resides on numerous NYC Boards including The JFK Rotary, The Queens Chamber of Commerce, and Queens Center for Progress. As a Latina woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry, Vargas has been committed to supporting other women entrepreneurs. She is a member of The New York Women's Chamber of Commerce and is very proactive in empowering other women of the industry.

SESSION 3 | 11:00 A.M.

EXPANDING PARTICIPATION OF EMERGING INVESTMENT MANAGERS

Come join a discussion and hear important information from New York State and New York City government major investment funds. Panelists will discuss their current investments and MWBE strategy and provide insight into the qualifications and the process to be selected as an emerging or MWBE/SDVOB investment manager.



MODERATOR

ANYORI "AJ" HERNANDEZ **PRESIDENT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE** **NEW AMERICAN ALLIANCE**

Anyori Hernandez is the former Director of Emerging Managers for the New York State Common Retirement Fund. Under the direction of State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli and Anastasia Titarchuk, CIO and Deputy Comptroller, the emerging manager team manages in excess of \$7 billion in commitments to over 125 emerging firms across all asset classes. The program's goal is to generate attractive risk-adjusted returns and participate in the growth of the next generation talent alongside a preference for firms that aspire to strong governance standards as well as diverse and inclusive practices.

Previously, Mr. Hernandez was the Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Yorkstone Management PR LLC, a boutique capital financing firm based in New York and Puerto Rico focused on funding working capital to small and medium sized businesses. Prior to founding Yorkstone, Mr. Hernandez was a Director at Barclays Wealth & Investment Management, Americas; he specialized in client development and provided his clients with new investments that achieved high risk-adjusted investment returns for individual securities, investment funds and portfolios.

Prior to Barclays, Mr. Hernandez was a Senior Investment Officer and Director for the New York State Common Retirement Fund, Office of the State Comptroller. He directed several core investment portfolios, restructured and reorganized asset classes and managed a large Emerging Manager multi-asset investment portfolio with a value of over \$4.5 billion in equity.

Additionally, Mr. Hernandez created several seeding programs that included a real estate fund-of-funds, private equity fund-of-one and an absolute hedge fund seed platform. He holds a Masters in Real Estate Finance and Investment and a Bachelor of Arts from New York University.





SYLVESTER McCLEARN
DIRECTOR, EMERGING MANAGER PROGRAM
OFFICE OF NYS STATE COMPTROLLER

Sylvester McClearn (Sly) is the Director of the Emerging Manager Program for the New York State Common Retirement Fund ("NYSCRF"). Sly coordinates the investment activities and interactions with Emerging Managers and represent NYSCRF in the extensive network and ecosystem of Emerging Managers. Sly monitors the \$10.2 billion Emerging Manager portfolio of public and private assets across Equities, Fixed Income, Real Estate, Real Assets and Credit/Opportunistic asset classes. Sly received both a B.S. and M.B.A. from Fordham University and is currently a Trustee Fellow of the University. Sly is an active member in industry associations such as the National Association of Security Professionals (NASP), National Organization of Investment Professionals (NOIP), Security Traders Association (STANY), and Sponsorship for Educational Opportunity (SEO).



LEI ZHANG
HEAD OF EXTERNAL PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT
NYS INSURANCE FUND

Lei Zhang is a seasoned financial professional with over 16 years of experience in investment management and the insurance industry. Prior to this, Lei worked at Axis Capital and AIG, specializing in asset allocation and risk management. Lei holds an MS in Financial Engineering from NYU-Polytechnic Institute, an MEng in Biomedical Engineering from Nanyang Technological University, and a BS in Electrical Engineering from Northwestern Polytechnic University. Lei Zhang joined NYSIF in 2018 as a Senior Investment Analyst and in 2021 promoted to Head of External Portfolio Managers. As the Head of External Portfolio Management at the New York State Insurance Fund, Lei oversees a diverse portfolio that includes fixed income, public equity, and private credit.



CHARLETTE HAMAMIGIAN
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER, CONTRACTS & PROCUREMENT
OFFICE OF NYC COMPTROLLER

Charlette Hamamigian is currently the Deputy Comptroller for Contracts and Procurement in the Office of NYC Comptroller Brad Lander. Charlette oversees the review of all contracts, contract amendments, leases and concessions between City agencies and vendors to confirm that procedural requisites have been certified by contracting agencies, that funding exists to support the contract action, and that there was no fraud or corruption in the letting of the contract. Prior to the Comptroller's Office, Charlette served as the Senior Executive Director for Contracts and Purchasing for the New York City Department of Education where she developed and implemented the procurement policy and strategy and managed the procurement services and contract compliance for the largest school system in the nation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Charlette oversaw the team that ensured the procurement of critical PPE and other services necessary to support remote learning, the distribution of meals, and the safe reopening of schools. Charlette's experience also includes Agency Chief Contracting Officer and other procurement and budget leadership roles at the New York City Departments of Design and Construction, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and at the New York City Economic Development Corporation. Charlette received her undergraduate degree from New York University and earned her J.D. from St. John's University School of Law. She is admitted to practice law in New York and Connecticut.



DAVID PEREZ
CO-FOUNDER AND MANAGING PARTNER
AVANCE INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

David Perez is a Co-founder and a Managing Partner of Avance Investment Management, LLC. Prior to founding Avance, Mr. Perez was the President and COO of Palladium Equity Partners. Prior to Palladium, Mr. Perez had several senior private equity roles, including Principal of General Atlantic Partners and Atlas Venture and Senior Associate of Chase Capital Partners. Mr. Perez started his career with James D. Wolfensohn and Co, focused on mergers and acquisitions. Mr. Perez earned his B.S. in Systems Engineering from Dresden University of Technology, a M. Eng. in Engineering Management from Cornell University, and an MBA from Harvard Business School. Mr. Perez is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a Co-Chair of the Harvard University Cuba Studies Advisory Group, President of the Board of Trustees of the Trinity School in New York City, and a longstanding board member and former President of the Board of Ballet Hispanico. He also served as Chairman of the Board of the NAIC.

LUNCH MENU

ROASTED SIRLOIN OF BEEF

Tender cut of beef with a Red Wine Reduction,
Demi-Glaze and Mushroom Garnish

CHICKEN PANCETTA

Chicken Breast Stuffed with Pancetta,
Spinach and Smoked Gouda

Entrees are served with

ROASTED YUKON GOLD POTATOES

GRILLED ASPARAGUS SPEARS

COMPOSED SALAD

CREAM PUFFS

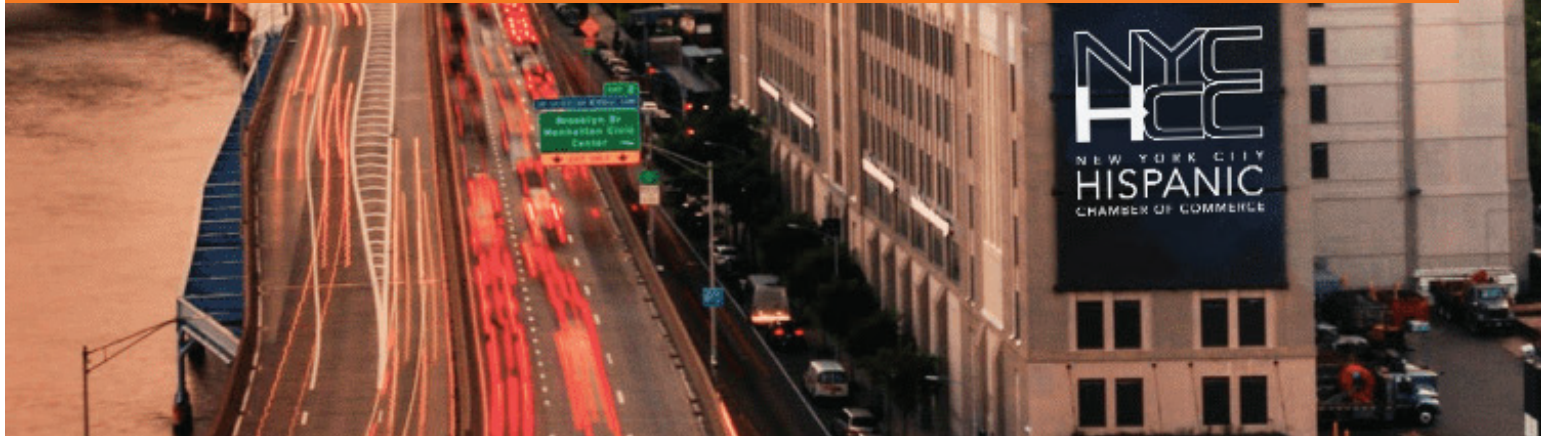
French choux pastry filled with sweet cream





The New York City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
would like to congratulate the Honorees of the
30th Annual Competitive Edge Conference Awards Gala
on their achievements and dedication in their field

Visit us at hispanicchamber.nyc



212-348-2339

159 East 116th Street, Second floor

Info@nychcc.com

SESSION 4 | 1:00 P.M.

THE POWER OF THE PIPELINE: MARKET INSIGHTS & BUSINESS PIPELINE OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEW YORK

This panel will delve into the current landscape and future of the infrastructure market in New York. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the market dynamics, investment opportunities, and strategic developments shaping the infrastructure sector.



MODERATOR

MICHAEL PATERNO VICE PRESIDENT, CONSTRUCTION SERVICES GANNETT FLEMING

Michael Paterno is a professional engineer, certified construction manager, and sustainability professional with 20 years of infrastructure engineering experience in the New York, San Francisco, and Baltimore areas.

Mr. Paterno has provided construction management services for New York City Department of Design and Construction, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and other local agencies. Mr. Paterno is a member of ACEC NY and is a Past President of the Construction Management Association of America - Metro Chapter.

He is currently a Vice President of Construction Services (New York) at Gannett Fleming.





JOHN GASPARINE

**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & NORTHEAST DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
WSP USA**

John Gasparine is a Senior Vice President and Northeast Development Director for WSP, where he is responsible for strategic growth of the company. John has worked across the transportation, advanced manufacturing, energy, and water sectors and brings passion for helping small firms grow.



STAMATIA (TAMMY) PETSIOS

**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE
STV INC.**

A visionary leader in transportation and infrastructure planning, Stamatia (Tammy) Petsios, LEED® AP brings more than 30 years of expertise to her role as senior vice president and client service director for STV's Transportation Northeast group. Her career spans both public and private sectors, where she has been instrumental in shaping the urban landscape of the Northeast, particularly New York City. With a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from New York Polytechnic University, Petsios has spearheaded numerous high-profile projects for organizations like the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, New Jersey Transit and New York City Planning. Her work focuses on enhancing transportation systems, fostering economic growth and improving quality of life across New York's diverse communities. A passionate advocate for diversity in engineering, Petsios actively participates in the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) and mentors early-career professionals. She's also involved with the American Council of Consulting Engineering and New York Building Congress. Petsios navigates the complex landscape of infrastructure funding, while championing innovative solutions that are reshaping the future of urban development. Her incisive insights and forward-thinking approach have established her as an authoritative voice, driving critical conversations and steering the course of city planning into a new era.



HOUSSAM AKRA

**DIRECTOR, PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
HAYDAN CONSULTANTS**

Houssam is the Director of Program Management at Haydan Consultants, where he oversees project delivery, staff development and training, and business development for programs and projects in the New York Metro area. Houssam holds a Master's degree in Construction Management from Columbia University and is a certified Professional Engineer, Project Management Professional, and Design-Build Professional with experience in a variety of sectors including infrastructure, transportation, waterfront, power/energy, education, and commercial. His career has been centered around providing program and construction management services to New York City public agencies, and he has worked on key infrastructure projects including Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency, Green Infrastructure, and Bush Terminal.



STEVEN MCKESSEY

**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
CUMMING GROUP**

As Senior Vice President, Steven leads a portfolio of projects that include infrastructure (including multiple airport projects in NYC, Chicago and Miami), office, media and high education across the Northeast. Areas of expertise include project operating models, organization / governance structures, processes improvement, project controls, risk management and value improvement. He also worked with Turner Construction for just under a decade, working across the full project lifecycle as estimator, engineer, superintendent, cost engineer, and project manager. Then shifted into management consulting, where he split time with Accenture Strategy and McKinsey & Co. supporting the assessment and turnaround of large complexed capital projects. Steven studied Civil Engineering at Temple University, and he received his MBA from Northwestern University's renowned Kellogg School of Management.

SESSION 5 | 2:00 P.M.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: M/WBES TAKING FLIGHT: A CASE STUDY ABOUT DIVERSITY IN CONTRACTING AT THE JFK REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This panel will delve into M/WBE success stories at the JFK Redevelopment Program, focusing on how they were achieved, what tools and strategies were employed by the public agency and private developers/contractors, how M/WBEs can prepare themselves for opportunities on similar projects, and what opportunities still remain to be bid out or awarded at JFK.



MODERATOR

RACHELLE ANTOINE MANAGER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH JFK REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Rachelle Antoine is the Manager of External Affairs and Community Outreach for the John F. Kennedy International Redevelopment Program. In this role, she is the primary point of contact for public outreach, community engagement, and community benefits program development for the JFK Airport Redevelopment Program, the airport's historic \$19 billion redevelopment program. She also operates the JFK Redevelopment Community Information Center, a public resource for job and contracting opportunities, training, and business development for residents.

Rachelle's collaborative approach is a cornerstone of her work. She works with the Port Authority of New York and New and the terminal developers to help advance the 30% Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) goals for projects associated with the redevelopment program. Her engagement with elected officials, local, state, and federal government partners, businesses, faith-based institutions, and various stakeholders is instrumental in ensuring access and opportunities for local and diverse enterprises, MWBEs, and in expanding community outreach efforts and developing business, workforce, career development, education, and environmental sustainability programs.

Previously, Rachelle served as the Budget Director for the New York State Assembly, where she led the budgeting process for the community office and worked as a community liaison, coordinating with government agencies to address constituent concerns.

Rachelle is also a Corporate Social Worker. She holds a Master of Science in Macro Social Work from Columbia University and a bachelor's degree in Social Work from York College, City University of New York.





HERSH PAREKH

DEPUTY CHIEF OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

Hersh Parekh manages the Government & Community Relations department for New York. He and his team build and manage relationships with elected officials and governmental partners at the local, state, and federal level, along with business, faith, civic, education, and other community leaders and stakeholders. Together, they work to ensure there is regular engagement, open lines of communication, and ongoing partnership between many diverse and historically disadvantaged communities and some of the country's most important transportation infrastructure facilities. Hersh also oversees the government and community relations portfolio for the agency's largest capital projects, including the \$8 billion program to build A Whole New LGA, the \$19 billion program to build A New JFK, the \$10 billion project to build a new Midtown Bus Terminal and more. He also develops strategies and leads efforts to ensure economic and educational opportunities flow to the local community, including M/WBE and local business contracting, technical training and capacity building programs for businesses, workforce development and local hiring efforts as well as STEM educational programming and scholarships for students. He is a native of Queens, NY. Hersh is also an attorney admitted to the bar in New York and New Jersey.



UZO OKOYE

CHIEF OF STAFF THE NEW TERMINAL ONE

Uzoamaka N. Okoye is the Chief of Staff at The New Terminal One at JFK. In collaboration with the CEO and the Executive Leadership team, she drives strategy, planning and organizational development across all areas of the business. She oversees several functions that touch every area of the business, including communications, sustainability, board and company governance. Uzoamaka brings more than two decades of experience in the construction and development industry, including substantial expertise as a legal adviser on construction and environmental law in the New York metropolitan area. She served for more than a decade at law firms Troutman Sanders (now Troutman Pepper) and Gibbons, prior to acting as Legal Counsel to NTO's Project Management Office for four years before being appointed Chief of Staff in 2023. She began her career as a project engineer in New York, working on water and wastewater infrastructure projects and assisting in the oversight and management of design and construction. Uzoamaka holds a Juris Doctor degree from Rutgers Law School, a Master's Degree in Environmental Engineering from New York University – Polytechnic School of Engineering and a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from American University.



CARLTON BYRD

MANAGING DIRECTOR AMERICAN TRIPLE I PARTNERS (JFK MILLENNIUM)

Carlton is responsible for developing relationships with investor partners and driving the firm's investor and external relations. He brings over 20 years of experience in infrastructure, alternative asset management, capital markets, and government service to the firm. Most recently, he was a Director in the Investor Development Group of Actis where he helped raise nearly \$4 billion in energy and infrastructure funds targeting projects in the developing markets of Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Carlton began his career at Goldman Sachs and served as a Lieutenant, U.S. Navy during the first Gulf War. Carlton received a Master of Business Administration in Finance from Harvard University, a Bachelor of Science in Systems Engineering from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Bachelor of Science in Economics with a degree in Finance from the Wharton School of Business.



DAN SAWH

FOUNDER & PRESIDENT HAYDAN CONSULTANTS

Dan Sawh founded Haydan Consultants, Inc., in 2019, an Owner's Representative firm specializing in a myriad of hands-on professional services to the construction industry across the transportation, power/energy, facilities and water markets. Haydan is a certified Minority Business Enterprise, Small Business Enterprise and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise headquartered in Rosedale, Queens. During his 37-year career, Dan has been committed to growing diversity in the AEC industry through mentorship programs, proactive recruiting efforts and partnership outreach to certified Minority and/or Women-Owned Business Enterprises. Dan believes strongly in paying forward the life-changing experiences he has had working in the industry, aiming to empower the next generation by providing opportunities to flourish, with a constant focus on equality. Dan is a Board Member of CORO New York and is active with a number of other philanthropic and community organizations. He is studying accounting at Baruch College, but found his personal and professional passion in the AEC industry, inspired by the architecture, engineering and construction fields working together toward the common goal of making a positive impact on residents and their communities through the built environment.

30th ANNUAL COMPETITIVE EDGE CONFERENCE AWARDS GALA

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM - NETWORKING RECEPTION

Hosted by REGIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SMALL CONTRACTORS

AWARDS GALA DINNER MENU

SPECIALTY COCKTAIL

APPLE-JACK OLD FASHIONED

applejack brandy, fresh pressed apple juice, aromatic bitters, brown sugar rim, dehydrated apple slice

HOT HORS D'OEUVRES

ADOBE BEEF SHORT RIBS

smoky chipotle glaze

BLANKETED FRANKS

caraway kraut mustard sauce

CRAB CAKES

avocado cilantro sauce

SWEET CHILI LIME CHICKEN gf

kewpie mayo, pickled cucumber, daikon

TOMATO BASIL HAND PIE

ricotta impastata, balsamic reduction, basil pesto

COLD HORS D'OEUVRES

BEEF SIRLOIN CARPACCIO

dijon caper sauce, parmesan, pretzel crostini

CLASSIC SHRIMP COCKTAIL gf

horseradish gin cocktail sauce

ARTISAN VEGETABLE & QUINOA

SUSHI gf + v

trio of pickled beets, butternut squash, cucumbers

APPETIZER

CAESAR CAPRESE STACK

heirloom tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, crispy eggplant, tuscan greens, pesto, balsamic glaze

ENTRÉE

BEEF PROVENCAL gf

tomato squash confit, kale & leek sauté, crisp parmesan, hasselback potatoes, burgundy jus

DESSERT

BERRIES & CREAM CROSTATA

blueberry compote, coconut crumble, lemon berry syrup, creme fraiche chantilly





CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL COMPETITIVE EDGE HONOREES!

We are grateful to Competitive Edge for recognizing and supporting small businesses. ProHealth Connect is honored to be among those committed to uplifting local communities and driving positive change.

ProHealth Connect boosts the empowerment of healthcare members to access products and services which support social determinants of health, through access of Prohealth Connects network of community base independent retailers.



Since 2022
over **\$252** million
funnelled back
into local communities



Serving U.S. communities
in all **50** states,
Puerto Rico, and
the Virgin Islands



Over 6000 retailers
in our network - supermarkets,
bodegas, and pharmacies -
to deliver health plan benefits
where they matter most



Supporting
over 500,000 members
across the nation



30th ANNUAL COMPETITIVE EDGE CONFERENCE AWARDS GALA

8:00 PM - 9:30 PM - PRESENTATION OF AWARDS



JESSI MITCHELL MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES CBS NEWS

Jessi Mitchell joined the CBS New York team as a multi-skilled journalist in October 2021, focusing her reporting in Harlem. Nightly, she also anchors the 8pm Atlanta Now News on the CBS-owned station, Atlanta 69. Jessi spent two years in the CBS News Atlanta bureau, where she won a national Emmy for her work covering major breaking news stories. Prior to joining CBS News, Jessi spent seven years as a multimedia journalist and anchor in Oklahoma City, Colorado Springs, and Columbus, Georgia. Her time in local news sparked a passion for helping others through storytelling, highlighting issues affecting minority communities, homeless populations, and domestic violence survivors. Jessi was born in Los Angeles and grew up in Atlanta. She attended Hampton University. She graduated Magna Cum Laude with a degree in Broadcast Journalism and a minor in Spanish. She is also a member of the National Association of Black Journalists, a contributor to the Women In Golf Foundation and the Hampton University Alumni Association. In 2023, Jessi was inducted into the Hall of Fame at Hampton's Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications. Jessi is an avid sneaker collector and golfer, and she enjoys hot yoga and taking long walks with her dog Scotty.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION LEADERSHIP AWARD

PRESENTED BY DAN SAWH, HAYDAN CONSULTANTS

SUZANNE VEIRA VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY (SCA)

Suzanne Veira is the Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer of the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA). She is responsible for delivering innovative solutions to increase contract opportunities for minorities, women and local business enterprises (MWBE). In this capacity, she oversees the Business Development Division (BDD) in the management of the SCA's MWLBE programs and in coordination with the construction management division, the oversight of the agency's mentor and graduate mentor programs. BDD also manages the SCA's high school and college internship programs, as well as the workforce development program opportunity academy. Suzanne has over 38 years of government experience including budgeting, procurement, small contractor, and workforce program development. Under her leadership, the SCA's mentor programs have been recognized as a national model. The authority has become a leader in ensuring opportunities across its entire capital program for MWLBE firms wishing to do business with the SCA. From fiscal years, 2015 through February 2023, the SCA obligated over \$4.8 billion to MWLBES firms in prime contract awards; of which over \$653 million were awarded through the agency's mentor and graduate mentor programs. In addition, from the fiscal year 2015 through February of 2022 - MWLBE firms have been awarded over \$2.7 billion in subcontracts on SCA work.



RISING STAR AWARD



STEVEN RIVERA CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER PROHEALTH CONNECT

Steven Rivera has committed his career to healthcare. In December 2019, Steven formed ProHealth Connect. They launched in January 2022 with 1,000 local independent retailers made up of bodegas, supermarkets and pharmacies, to provide access to thousands of products under OTC (over the counter) and grocery benefits. As of present, ProHealth Connect serves communities in 50 states and 2 U.S. Territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Prior to forming ProHealth Connect, Steven launched two very successful companies that have made a significant impact on healthcare through technology. In 2016, he launched with his business partners, Sentry Management Solutions, which is a technology company that revolutionizes the management and transport of non-emergency medical

transportation. In 2021, Sentry became the first NY state certified minority owned business to win the largest contract in MTA history. As of July 2024, ProHealth Connect services over 580,000 seniors, and continues to grow.

CLARENCE "GENE" SWANSTON LEADERSHIP AWARD

FRANCILIA WILKINS RAHIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER R.F. WILKINS CONSULTANTS, INC.

Francilia Wilkins Rahim is the CEO and founder of R.F. Wilkins Consultants, Inc., a development and management consulting firm dedicated to providing a comprehensive suite of services to drive the success of the nation's businesses. Founded in 2011, the firm manages a diverse portfolio of public and private sector projects and specializes in project management, compliance, and technology systems integration. In 2023, Francilia founded her second firm AYO Labs. AYO is the nation's largest African American, women owned, health and beauty contract manufacturing facility, anchored in an accelerator to help diverse businesses scale. To date, Francilia has led RFV in raising more than \$877 million for clients, completing more than 1,000 unique projects and growing into the ranks of the top .1% of management consulting firms, owned by an African American Woman in the United States. She has aided in the development of numerous DEI initiatives and continues to advocate for equal opportunity for minorities in real estate, diverse contractors, and small businesses. In partnership with the New York Real Estate Chamber and New York City's Economic Development Corporation, she developed New York City's Emerging Development Loan Fund. In 2019, HNTB and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey named RFV one of two compliance contractors responsible for the \$19 billion JFK Airport redevelopment project. In 2023, her firm partnered with Unibal Rodamco Westfield (URW) to increase the number of diverse concessionaires within New York airports. In addition to her role as CEO of R.F. Wilkins Consultants, Francilia serves on various boards, including Greater Allen Development Corporation and Allen Community Non-Profit Programs.



SDVOB FIRM OF THE YEAR



ADNAN CHOWDHURY PRINCIPAL 4HOLDERS CONSTRUCTION

4Holders LLC is a service-disabled, veteran owned certified concrete contractor, specializing in concrete foundation and flatwork for public and private sectors clients in the Northeastern US construction industry. The company provides construction, project management and logistics & supply chain services, and has generated \$2,516,567 in revenue in 2023. Spearheaded by a retired Marine leader with 20 years of project management experience, 4Holders LLC is a people-focused company with a projected annual revenue of \$5 million in 2024. Continuing the mission of Actual Construction Inc's 30-year legacy in the concrete industry.

WBE FIRM OF THE YEAR



NANCY VARGAS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DH2 CHAUFFEURED TRANSPORTATION

Nancy Vargas is the owner of the JFK based chauffeured ground transportation provider, and who successfully provided ground transportation service in the entire New York Metro area since 1995. Thanks to Nancy's innovative business strategies, DH2 Chauffeured Transportation has enjoyed continued growth, despite regional and national economic downturns. Starting with the diversification into corporate transportation in 2016, they expanded the business into new market segments such as, government contracts, airline flight crew, construction mobility, hotel shuttle service, employee shuttle service and corporate events. In 2017, DH2 Chauffeured Transportation became MWBE certified with the city of New York, the state of New York and the Port Authority of NY and NJ. She also

holds an SBA and DBE with the Port Authority. DH2 is a leader in the transportation space when it comes to technology. DH2 utilizes GPS and drive cams in all vehicles, software for dispatching which includes text and/or email to all passengers on the status of their chauffeur's location, flight view software to monitor airline flights, and has an online 3 step booking system, to name a few tools utilized in their daily operations. As a Latina woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry, Vargas has been committed to supporting other women entrepreneurs. Vargas has been awarded the 5 Chamber Alliance Award, Businesswoman of the Year, Power Women in Business, CEO of the Year, and Transportation Women of the Year.

MBE FIRM OF THE YEAR

MARCOS MERCED
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
QNA TECH



Marcos Merced is an accomplished entrepreneur, business leader, and technology expert. As the founder and CEO of QNA Tech, a New York based innovative tech company, he is dedicated to providing cutting-edge solutions for modern businesses. His experience working for local government at CUNY Central and DOITT of NYC, further refined his technical knowledge and problem-solving skills. Through QNA Tech, Marcos brings groundbreaking advancements to the world of technology. His passion for excellence extends to community involvement, both personally and through his company. An active member of the National Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Long Island Chamber of Commerce, he contributes time and resources to support emerging minority and women-owned businesses (MWBEs). QNA Tech collaborated with organizations like N-Power to empower inner-city youth seeking careers in tech, and actively supports charities focused on healthcare, children and education.

DBE FIRM OF THE YEAR



CARLOS ALBERTO LOPEZ
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
C.L. ELECTRIC CORP.

C.L. Electric Corporation is a certified minority-owned electrical firm, that was established in 2011. With a combined experience of over 80 years, they are able to provide reliable electrical services and maintenance for projects in the commercial and public sector, industrial and residential fields. C.L. Electric Corp. is committed to providing premium electrical services on all of their projects. With a strong understanding of budgeting, their management team continues to work efficiently to complete projects on time and on budget. C.L. Electric currently provides electrical services in New York City and the Long Island area. Some of their past projects include MTA TBTA, MTA NYCT, IPCCT, JFK Airport Terminal 5, Con Edison, Coca Cola, New York State Battery Park and NYC SCA.



112-52 Guy R Brewer Blvd,
Jamaica, NY 11433
Tel: 718-521-0001 Fax: 718-0011
General Email info@amnyelectric.com
www.amnyelectric.com

Note from our President,

On behalf of myself and my team here at AM NY ELECTRIC CORP we would like to congratulate all the honorees of this years' Competitive Edge Conference. You are a pillar of leadership in your industry and today we honor your service.

A special thank you to Competitive Edge for recognizing and continuing to support small businesses. As a minority owned business these networking opportunities provided by Competitive Edge has influenced our ability to grow. AM NY ELECTRIC CORP has been in business for 10 plus years with a growing reputation of being a reliable sustainable Electrical Contractor. We are committed to serving our clients with the best electrical contractor experience. We are in gratitude to be amongst all firms present here tonight. Congratulations to all honorees once again!

With sincere thanks,
Andre Moseley, President



Ponce Bank

Member
FDIC



In the community Of the community For the community.

Ponce Bank was born in The Bronx in 1960, where our Puerto Rican founders saw the potential of proud, diverse neighborhoods, anchored by a strong immigrant work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit.

Today, we are a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) & a Minority Depository Institution (MDI), promoting social, health, economic and climate equity for all our neighbors. Ponce Bank. Dreamers Welcome.

Love Local BankingSM



poncebank poncebank.com



CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN NYC? SUBCONTRACTORS NOT PERFORMING?



CONCRETE, MASONRY, SITEWORK

DISCOVER US @
WWW.4HOLDERS.COM



TOUGH, TRAINED, TRUSTWORTHY



New York State Certified
Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business





CONGRATULATES OUR VERY OWN CEO
NANCY VARGAS

AS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 30TH COMPETITIVE EDGE AWARD
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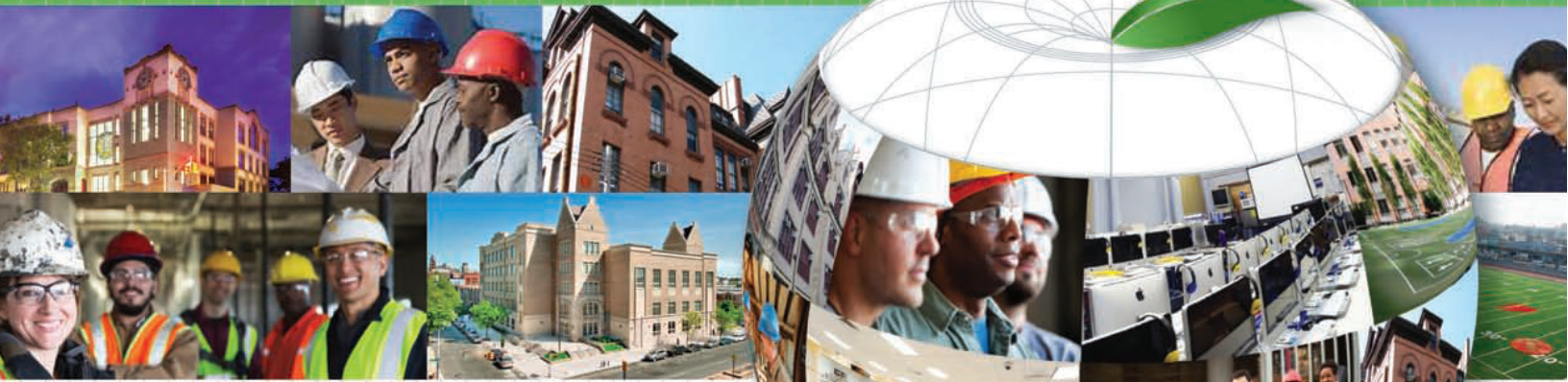
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Build With Us

The New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) is Always Building

The SCA is dedicated to building and modernizing New York City's public schools in an environmentally responsible, cost effective manner while achieving the highest standards of excellence in safety, quality and integrity. Through its multi-billion dollar five-year Capital Plan, the SCA provides pre-qualified contractors and consultants with opportunities to compete for and win work on a variety of projects, as follows:

CAPACITY PROJECTS

Large-scale construction jobs that create new classroom seats, typically through construction of new buildings, major modernization work, additions, or building out leased space. Their estimated construction value is generally more than \$20 million.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)

The SCA invests millions of capital dollars annually to maintain and upgrade existing school buildings. These projects typically involve interior and exterior work (e.g. roofs, parapets, windows, as well as upgrades to electrical systems, heating plants and climate controls). Their estimated construction value is usually under \$20 million.

MENTOR AND GRADUATE MENTOR PROGRAMS

The Mentor Programs provide emerging Minority, Women and Local Business Enterprises (MWLBE) firms with contracting opportunities, valuable training, access to bonding and loan programs, capacity building and technical assistance resources. The estimated construction on these projects is under \$2 million.



Grow With Us

The SCA is committed to building Working Relationships with Minority, Women and Local Business Enterprises (MWLBE)

The Business Development Division (BDD) offers a variety of programs to help MWLBE firms grow their businesses and access contracting opportunities at the SCA. To be eligible to participate in these programs, a business must become prequalified and certified by the SCA as an MBE, WBE or LBE.

In addition to the SCA's mentor programs that are available to certified MWLBE construction firms, the SCA's contract requirements include a 30% MWLBE participation goal for construction and consultant contracts.

Grow With Us! Visit the SCA website or call today to find out how to get started.

Learn More (Working With Us) www.nycsca.org

Vendor Access System (Online Application)
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Certification

Dormitory Authority State of NY- MBE
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MEMBERSHIP SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Business & Diversity Initiatives
- Outreach Coordination
- Small Business Development Training Programs
- Informational Sessions – Access to Contract Opportunities
- Public and Private Partnership Programs
- Certification Support for MWBE, DBE, LBE, and SDVOB
- Small Business Certification Assistance
- Access to Financial Programs

OUR MEMBERS INCLUDE:

- New York State and New Jersey Public Agencies and Corporations
- Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE)
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)
- Locally Based Enterprise (LBE)
- Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business (SDVOB)
- Business Seeking Certification as MWBE, DBE, LBE, or SDVOB

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Zenaida Rodriguez
Executive Director

Grace Cepeda

Brandon Washington

Kamaria Aubry

We are committed to providing our members with access to valuable services and opportunities, including business and diversity initiatives, outreach coordination, small business development training, and informational sessions. In addition, we offer certification support for businesses seeking to become MWBEs, DBEs, LBEs, or SDVOBs.

Our members include a diverse range of businesses, including MWBEs, DBEs, LBEs, SDVOBs, and those seeking certification. We also work with public agencies and corporations in New York and New Jersey, providing access to contract opportunities and public and private partnership programs.

Join our community of successful and diverse businesses today to take advantage of these valuable membership benefits.

REGIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SMALL CONTRACTORS

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SAVE THE DATE!

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Join us again next year and
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the minority business community
for access to contracts.



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