



For immediate release

Construction companies seek new strategies to meet minority participation goals *New tools can help them get it right*

BOSTON, November 15, 2017 – In Massachusetts there are many qualified minority-owned businesses (MBEs) in the building trades, yet some construction companies fall short in meeting MBE participation goals.

According to Travis Watson, Community Impact Officer at [Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation \(MHIC\)](#), a private nonprofit community development lender, there are a several reasons for non-compliance, but “a primary reason is that they don’t know how to do it. Companies have minority business goals but little support. They often don’t know where to turn for help in finding qualified MBEs, so they improvise and therefore they’re not likely to meet the goals,” he said.

Mr. Travis said that, “while many construction companies do a good job at meeting their goals, others consider mandated MBE goals “onerous,” and they don’t go the extra mile to comply. But even companies which understand that MBEs are not getting the contracts they deserve, sometimes struggle to meet their goals, he said.

In response to these issues and other challenges, Mr. Watson has helped MHIC create a new resource – the [Access and Opportunity Network \(www.accessandopportunity.org\)](#) – a clearinghouse of strategies, news, best practices, and directories to help companies meet or exceed their minority participation goals, and generally help create more diversity in the construction industry. The website provides support for developers and construction companies working on MHIC-financed projects, and makes it easier for them to comply with hiring goals.

More broadly, the Access and Opportunity Network website provides resources for finding qualified MBEs based in Massachusetts and Rhode Island for a range of jobs in the building trades. It has a manual on Best Practices, examples of company Minority Participation and Diversity Plans, links to organizations such as the [Massachusetts Minority Contractors Association](#), case studies and news related to the field. Perhaps most importantly, the website has a downloadable data base of MBEs in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, broken down by sub-specialties, and direct links to directories of state-certified MBEs. For noncertified companies that want more work on construction projects, the website provides guidance on how to get certified as well as the forms required to apply.

Mr. Watson said that the Access and Opportunity Network is the only centralized source and data base with information about expanding diversity in the building trades in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

MHIC President Joe Flatley said, “There are many ways to expand MBE participation for construction projects and several highly-successful minority-owned businesses in New England, like Cruz Construction and Janey Construction Management & Consulting, that have prospered notwithstanding challenges. But there’s no good reason why other qualified MBEs shouldn’t also have the opportunity to grow and prosper. Our website will help by creating a network and providing tools for those committed to meeting minority participation goals, making more equitable the distribution of contracts and creating more diversity in the building trades.”

For more information about the network, see [www.accessandopportunity.org](#)