



# Connecting the DOTs

Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization Newsletter

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## A Message from Dr. Willie Smith, Senior Procurement Executive

By some calculations, small businesses generate more than 40% of the U.S. economic activity. Recognizing that small businesses are the lifeblood of the U.S. economy, a key part of the mission of the [Office of the Senior Procurement Executive](#)

(through the activities of nearly 500 contracting officers and contracting specialists across the Department) is to ensure that our procurement practices continue to support the creation of new jobs - while at the same time help the Department benefit from the innovation and competitiveness that drive our economy.

With more than \$8 billion in federal-direct contracting, (and policy and oversight for billions more), OSPE continues to push actively toward the Administration's and the Department's priorities in areas of safety, infrastructure, climate, and diversity. With the influx of dollars coming into the Department through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Department is continuing to place high priority on the importance of perpetually building USDOT relationships and networks with the small business community. We are accomplishing this in ways that include procurement and contracting opportunities in a variety of areas, grants and financial assistance that support economic opportunity, and an array of other acquisition-related initiatives.

The President's budget as well as an assortment of executive orders provide overwhelming evidence of the Administration's recognition that procurement is a key component of federal service that can help achieve the Administration's management agenda. As a Department, we are continuing to seek your engagements and outreach as you review our procurement forecasts to determine what capabilities the Department is seeking over the next couple of years, identify areas where you have unique capabilities from which the Department can benefit in ways that might not be on our procurement forecast, and that you reach out to Departmental stakeholders, especially small business specialists, to ensure that you have the abundance of information, access, and opportunity as together we achieve the Department's important mission.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Willie Smith*

Senior Procurement Executive



# CELEBRATING WOMEN

A Month of Matchmaking Events for Woman-Owned Small Businesses

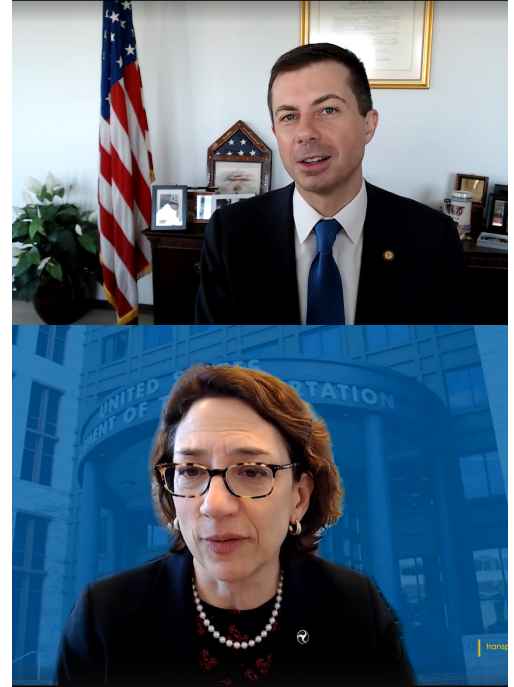


## OSDBU Celebrates Women's History Month with 3rd Annual Event

On March 15, in observance of Women's History Month, the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) hosted the [3rd Annual Women's Wednesday for Small Business and Matchmaking Event](#). This event was also planned in alignment with the federal mandate to award at least five percent of U.S. Department of Transportation procurement dollars to Women-Owned Small Businesses.

Panelists were given the opportunity to hear from not only U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg, but our operating administrations (FAA, FHWA, OST), partner agencies (MBDA, GSA, DOE), various banking institutions and small business investment capital funds, and some of our internal USDOT programs. Additionally, firms were given the opportunity to hear from The Elocen Group, a minority woman-owned small business who has had great success contracting with the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Brittany Young, Small Business Specialist and Women-Owned Small Business Advocate, spearheaded the event in coordination with the OSDBU team with the goal of providing women-owned small business opportunities — ranging from capacity building resources, access to capital, best practices, and upcoming contracting opportunities, including Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-related projects.



*DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg provides welcome remarks and DOT Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg provides closing remarks at the OSDBU hosted Women's Wednesday event.*



## Roundtable Sessions Dedicated to Women-Owned Small Businesses

The U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce (USWCC) joined USDOT Connections MarketPlace Meet the Mentors roundtable session. Women-owned small business attendees learned about USWCC's mission to help women start and build successful businesses and careers, how to gain access to government contracts, grow as leaders and prepare for a secure retirement.

Closing out the week for our events dedicated to women-owned small businesses, the National Association of Black Women in Construction, Inc. (NABWIC) joined the USDOT Connections

MarketPlace Teaming Talks roundtable session. As an advocate for contract opportunities for Black women-owned construction businesses, they shared with attendees best practices on creating strategic professional connections to support and contract with the federal government.



# SUCCESS STORIES

Recognizing & Celebrating our Small Business Community



*Doreen Blades, CEO of US Eco Products Corporation*

## Small Business Leverages Strengths and Expands During Pandemic

Doreen Blades, President and CEO of US Eco Products Corporation, founded in 2009, is a full-service government contractor, logistics, and fulfillment solution provider of sustainable green products and sanitation services. In addition, the company works as a wholesaler of chemical and related products, providing maintenance and cleaning products to companies, colleges, universities, states, airports, airlines, restaurants, and federal agencies.

Ms. Blades is certified as an 8(a), Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB), Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Business (EDWOSB) and an Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business

Enterprise (ACDBE). The business is also certified by NY/NJ Port Authority as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Women Business Enterprise (WBE) for the Northeast Region as well as a certified HUBZone company in the gateway city of Haverhill, MA.

Ms. Blades came to Northeast Small Business Transportation Resource Center (SBTRC) in 2017 to obtain technical assistance for certification as a DBE starting her business in her home state of Massachusetts and subsequently continued to expand her DBE certifications to all 50 states. The Northeast SBTRC helped her obtain these certifications and identified various projects and state and federal contract opportunities at various transportation agencies. As a result, this business has capitalized on these certifications. Doreen Blades was named Top CEO WBE's of 2017 by WEUSA and the WBE star of 2016 by WBENC and Awarded SBA New England Region Prime Contractor of the Year 2022.

"Northeast SBTRC has been a valued resource in the Eco-Products Corporation journey over the past several years, particularly in helping the company leverage its strengths despite many perceived disadvantages," said Blades.

Due to the nature of US Eco Product Corporation and the need for sanitized products due to the Covid-19 impact, her business achieved a more significant number of contracts at the federal level. As a result, a company that used to generate approximately \$200,000 (2018) in annual revenue reported over \$2.1 million from new state and federal contracts by the end of 2022. Ms. Blades received contracts for pier building materials from a local construction company (B Robert Our Co.), supplying ice melt to the Columbus Ohio Airport, and catering supplies to Sodexo for Alaskan Airlines in Seattle and Portland airports. In 2020 US Eco Products supplied LaGuardia Gateway Partners and Virginia Department of Transportation with COVID supplies, and in 2023 provided NYC Department of Transportation with snow blowers.



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*Article Prepared by Lizbeth Rodriguez, Program Director for Northeast SBTRC*



# OSDBU HIGHLIGHTS

## OSDBU Efforts to our Small Business Community



*From left to right: President of Madison Services Group Elizabeth Sullivan, Executive Director of HUBZone Contractors National Council Michelle Burnette, and USDOT OSDBU 8(a) & HUBZone Advocate, Natalie Rosa.*

## OSDBU Engages Small Businesses at National 8(a) Association Conference

The 2023 National Small Business Conference was hosted by the HUBZone Contractor's National Council and the National 8(a) Association in New Orleans, Louisiana. Natalie Rosa, Small Business Specialist, 8(a) and HUBZone Advocate participated at this annual conference; providing technical assistance and engaging with small businesses interested in becoming federal contractors at match-making sessions. The USDOT was also honored to be named one of four finalists for Agency of the Year for our Small Disadvantaged Business and HUBZone achievements last fiscal year. Congratulations to the Defense Logistics Agency who won the award!

**Pictured above:** Natalie Rosa, Michelle Burnette, the Executive Director of HUBZone Contractors National Council and Elizabeth Sullivan, President of Madison Services Group (a woman-owned government relations company focused on federal procurement and small business policy) reconnected around their efforts in this field as second generation small business advocates. It certainly runs in the family; all three of their mothers also helped to pave the way for thousands of small business owners in federal contracting for decades and have handed the torch to their daughters to continue this important work.

## Connections MarketPlace Launches a New Website

Originally created in February 2022, the Connections MarketPlace provides the small and disadvantaged business community with technical assistance and capacity building activities. One year later, Connections MarketPlace (CMP) has a new platform! The [CMP matchmaking platform](#) features an online community, roundtable sessions, and business matchmaking services to help provide insight and understanding for small business attendees on industry best practices.

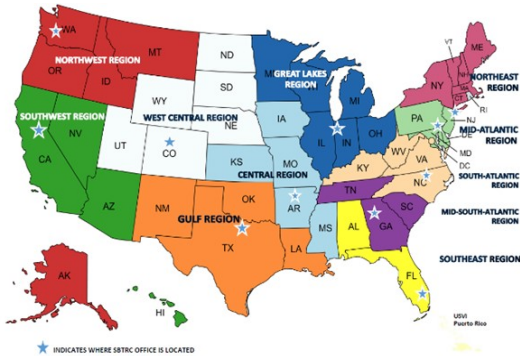


The platform allows profile holders to connect at any time and help build out market research efforts for upcoming acquisitions. Departmental modal representatives and other stakeholders can also use the platform to expand their network of potential small business contractors, sub-contractors, and partners for transportation-related procurement opportunities. [Register today!](#)



# BEP HIGHLIGHTS

Updates from the USDOT Bonding Education Program



## West Central SBTRC kicks off 2023 with a Denver International Airport Bonding Education Program

In January 2023, [West Central SBTRC](#) Bonding Education Program (BEP) participants heard from top executives in construction accounting, contract negotiation, dispute resolution, strategic planning, marketing, surety, and project estimating. Participants also met exclusively with a bonding agent to determine a plan to increase their bonding capacity for future projects. The West Central SBTRC covers

Colorado, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. [Find a list of recent small business BEP graduates](#) and hear their recent reviews of the program:

*"You have provided really, really critical information and really, in my case, broadened my understanding of sureties and how to manage it. Thank you very much."*

*"GREAT, GREAT Presentation and solid information!!"*

*"It was a wealth of information provided. I enjoyed the bonding most because that was an area that we feel we need because of the government projects we are pursuing across the country and it's a requirement."*

West Central SBTRC is also hosting a Master Class Series & BEP this summer in July 2023 with stakeholders from Utah Department of Transportation, Salt Lake City International Airports, Utah Transit Authority (UTA), and Utah Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC). [Connect with the West Central SBTRC today to learn more and register before the July 5th deadline.](#)

## Southwest SBTRC to host Summer 2023 BEP

The [Southwest SBTRC](#) completed a very successful BEP in Winter 2022 where graduates learned about contracting best practices and the bonding process with representatives from California DOT, NORCAL PTAC, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and Commercial Insurance Associates. They will be [hosting an upcoming Summer 2023 program](#), reach out to the SBTRC today to learn more. The Southwest SBTRC covers Arizona, California, Hawaii, and Nevada.



Image from [SBTRC Southwest](#)



Have you already graduated from a BEP and want more information about the [SBA Surety Bond Guarantee Program](#)? [Are you a surety bond agent who wants to become an SBA surety partner?](#)



**BONDING  
EDUCATION  
PROGRAM**

The [Bonding Education Program \(BEP\)](#) provides a minimum of 2 BEPs per region annually. To find a BEP in your region, please reach out to the Project Director covering your state found [here](#).



# CONTRACT WITH DOT

SBTRC BIL Regional Symposiums for Small Business Opportunities



*Left to Right: Acting OSDBU Director, Leonardo San Roman, SBA Region IV Administrator, Ted James, and OSDBU Regional Assistance Division Manager, Peter Kontakos*

## USDOT Gulf SBTRC Hosts Small Business Contracting Symposium in Irving, TX

The USDOT Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) and its Small Business Transportation Resource Centers (SBTRCs) continue to partner to host our regional Small Business Contracting Symposiums. They are put on in collaboration with the US Small Business Administration (SBA) and Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) within US Department of Commerce. These regional symposiums provide small businesses information and resources related to upcoming contracting opportunities generated at the federal and state levels from the recently passed [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law \(BIL\)](#).

On March 8, the [USDOT Gulf SBTRC](#) with support from the North Texas Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO), hosted a regional symposium in Irving, TX. The event also livestreamed for audiences in Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg delivered opening remarks via pre-recorded video, and U.S. Department of Commerce MBDA Undersecretary, Donald Cravins Jr. participated virtually to share live remarks to symposium attendees. SBA Region IV Administrator, Ted James, and Dallas Area Rapid Transit President and CEO, Nadine Lee participated as featured morning speakers. In the afternoon, Region 6 FTA Administrator, Gail Lyssy and Dallas-Fort Worth Airport Vice President of Planning, Smitha Radhakrishnan participated as keynote speakers. Other panelists and representatives in attendance included MBDA, SBA, State DOTs, capital providers, and prime contractors. Special thanks to Jeri Bird, FAA Small Business Advocate, for her support of the event!

Additionally, the Gulf SBTRC hosted a dynamic [Women In Transportation Initiative \(WITI\) Program](#) event, "Aviation Careers & World of Drones." Two local area schools of young girls from middle and high schools participated in the event to learn about transportation careers and opportunities to engage in transportation-related initiatives from a variety of professionals.



*The Gulf Region's SBTRC WITI Program: Aviation Careers & World of Drones was held in Irving, TX, where 45 students from local schools learned about WITI internship opportunities and careers with an emphasis on drone pilots and the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) International Airport.*

Upcoming 2023 symposium dates and information on the [OSDBU News and Event page](#).



# GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

## Upcoming Funding Opportunities & Technical Assistance

### Become a USDOT SBTRC Grantee in the Central Region

In April, the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Central Region Small Business Transportation Resource Center (SBTRC) will be released on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for prospective applicants interested in becoming a grantee for the USDOT SBTRC in the Central Region which covers the states of Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, and Missouri. Learn more about the opportunity from a recorded [information session](#) held on January 11, 2023 as a resource for prospective applicants. Business-centered community-based organizations, transportation-related trade associations, colleges and universities, community colleges, or chambers of commerce, registered with the Internal Revenue Service as 501 C(6) or 501 C(3) tax-exempt organizations can compete for this funding.



#### More About Our Small Business Transportation Resource Centers

The USDOT OSDBU established the [SBTRCs](#) as a network of grantees across the country, and these centers work closely with the transportation contracting community and other technical assistance providers to serve small and disadvantaged, transportation-related businesses. These centers provide technical assistance to small and disadvantaged businesses to build their capacity in order to become more competitive when bidding on USDOT procurement opportunities and federally-funded contracts.



### Non-Federal Funding & Technical Assistance Opportunities

USDOT is part of the interagency [Thriving Communities Network](#), a partnership between Federal agencies intended to align and coordinate our technical assistance resources to help communities thrive.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) opened the portal for local governments to request technical assistance for its [Thriving Communities technical assistance \(TCTA\) program](#). This funding will help local governments which received federal transportation funding ensure housing needs are considered as part of their larger infrastructure investment plans, with a focus on disadvantaged communities. Local governments can request technical assistance using [this form](#). Requests are reviewed on a rolling basis starting March 15, 2023.

\$70 million in funding is available through the [Environmental Justice Government-to-Government \(EJG2G\) Program](#), which provides funding to support government activities that lead to measurable environmental or public health impacts in communities disproportionately burdened by harms. \$30 million is also available through the [Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement \(EJCPS\) Program](#), which provides financial assistance working to address local environmental or public health issues in their communities. Check out past webinar recordings and materials [here](#). Both applications are due by April 14, 2023.



# WHAT'S IN OUR TOOLBOX

The Tools Your Small Business Needs to Know



## Grant Resources Available for Technical Assistance

USDOT established the [Thriving Communities](#) program to provide technical assistance and capacity building resources to improve and foster thriving communities through transportation improvements. This initiative launched a new online portal called the [DOT Navigator](#) to help communities understand the best ways to apply for grants, and to plan for and deliver transformative infrastructure projects and services. To learn about what money is available, check out potential options on the [Overview of DOT Funding and Financing](#) webpage.

## Small Businesses are Small and Mighty



Check out all the essential tools for small businesses on the [OSDBU Resources and Tools](#) page. Learn more about the tools, resources and programs with our federal partners, the [Small Business Administration](#) (SBA) and [Minority Business Development Agency](#) (MBDA). The SBA provides free or low-cost [local assistance](#) in an array of technical centers, financial opportunities, and programs for small businesses. MBDA invests in a national network of MBDA [Business Centers](#) and [Federal Procurement Centers](#) which offer customized business development and industry-focused services to provide greater access to capital, contracts and markets.

Don't forget to talk with our [DOT Small Business Specialists](#) in each Operating Administration whose primary role is to serve as small businesses advocates. Our Procurement Assistance Division (PAD) works closely with each of these specialists to ensure that adequate procurement opportunities are made available to small businesses.

## Meet with OSDBU on the Road or Virtually



Attend an upcoming virtual event on our Connections Marketplace platform, which features an online community, roundtable sessions, and business match-making services with our DOT Operating Administrations.

Join the OSDBU team at one of our upcoming small business contracting symposiums to learn more about the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law opportunities in your region, navigating procurement within the region and federally, receiving technical and financial resources, and meeting one-on-one with procurement professionals and other stakeholders. To get all the information on upcoming events, go to our [event page](#) and please [subscribe to our listserv](#) for updates.