



TOP 100 MBE AWARDS™

HONORING MINORITY AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

## Report from the State of Maryland:

Luwanda W. Jenkins, Special Secretary, Governor's Office of Minority Affairs says, "Our success in raising the percentage of state contract awards for MBEs by 30% during the period of 2006-2008, is because Governor O'Malley has made the success of women and minority owned businesses a priority for his administration."

As Maryland's primary advocate for women and minority owned businesses, Jenkins predicts better, though fewer, opportunities for MBEs in future months. "The government shortfalls mean there will be less money for contracting, so there will be fewer projects to bid on. However, government agencies and large contractors are increasingly seeing small businesses as more efficient and more nimble than their larger counterparts. In fact, in order to obtain an edge in this time of increased competition, larger contractors are reaching out to MBEs who, for the most part, have lower overhead so can afford to charge less."

Maryland has formed two new alliances with neighboring states to improve access to regional opportunities. First, is the *Modified Reciprocity Certification Program*. Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia have DBE and ACDBE certification reciprocity agreements. If you are DBE or ACDBE certified in one of these jurisdictions, you can work on Federal projects in the other jurisdictions without applying for separate certification. [http://www.e-dot.com/MBE\\_Program/Documents/MOU-DBE.pdf](http://www.e-dot.com/MBE_Program/Documents/MOU-DBE.pdf) The second alliance, the Maryland State Highway Administration's Sponsored Contractor Training and Incubation Program, is a pilot program with the state of Delaware. A cohort of MBEs able to work on highway projects will be mentored by larger companies to help the MBEs build capacity to work as contractors and subcontractors on larger projects. This project is the first of its kind in the nation. Jenkins also refers MBEs to the state's Economic Recovery Act website <http://statestat.maryland.gov/smbusiness.asp>.

Maryland is the first State in the nation to meet requirements that will allow it to use at least half of the \$431 million of highway funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). States are required to certify with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that projects are eligible for federal funds and ready for construction within 120 days or the funding will be redistributed to other states. At Governor O'Malley's direction, Maryland achieved this milestone by obtaining FHWA approval of all 74 Phase I projects by Monday, March 23, only 20 days after the funds were allocated on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The logo features the text "TOP 100 MBEs" in a serif font, with "TOP 100" in a smaller size above "MBEs". The text is set against a circular background with a decorative border and a central emblem. The colors are primarily gold and pink.

# TOP 100 MBEs

Jenkins also offers some very sage advice for MBEs:

1. Get MBE certification. Most contracts have an MBE subcontracting goal and your company will not be selected as a subcontractor unless you have MBE certification.
2. Make sure **all** of your company's capabilities are documented with the appropriate NAIC codes. Many contractors select MBEs for subcontracting on the basis of the NAIC codes on the Maryland Department of Transportation's MBE Database. Failure to include all of the NAIC codes your company can perform can result in lost opportunities.
3. If you are eligible, get small business certification. Some state contracts are reserved for small businesses.
4. Keep your financial house in order. Make sure you have a stellar credit rating so you have better chances of getting or maintaining the credit you need to maintain or grow your business.
5. Past performance counts. To win repeat business with a contractor or a state agency, deliver on all of your promises.
6. Network, network and network some more. Get out from behind your desk and join trade associations and other organizations. Attend as many networking events as you can.
7. Be proactive---Register for eMaryland Marketplace and use its tools to have RFPs you are eligible to bid on sent to you automatically.
8. Attend pre-bid meetings. You will be better prepared to write your response to an RFP, and you will meet other businesses you can partner with to bid on the contract.

Jenkin's staff is available to answer questions and advocate for MBEs. They can be reached at (410) 767-8232.