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Jackson Health System's Miracle Building Bond Program Opening Doors to Local SBEs

Breaking into the healthcare construction sector as a small business enterprise construction (SBE-C) firm can be difficult—to even be considered, firms have to have experience, but that experience can only be gained by having worked on healthcare projects.

Understanding this dilemma, Jackson Health System has created a mentor/protégé program that provides local small businesses with the opportunity to shadow expert construction-management firms as they work on six major service contracts as part of

its Miracle Building Bond initiative.

“The bond initiative was started internally in 2012, when our different business entities that had capital needs came together and compiled a ‘wish list’ of what capital improvements would be needed, three, five, even 10 years into the future,” explained David Clark, associate vice president, Facilities Construction and Design Department, Jackson Health System. “An initiative was put before voters in 2013 that approved an \$830 million bond issue that included new and upgraded facilities, IT and medical equipment.”

✘ As part of the initiative, Jackson Health System pledged to take a designated portion of profits from its annual income and reinvest it back into the hospital, creating a 10-year, \$1.4 billion capital spending plan. Working with nationally recognized architects, engineers and designers, six major projects were defined, and in April of 2016, construction managers were competitively selected to begin work on the Christine E. Lynn Rehabilitation Center for the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis at UHealth/Jackson Memorial; a new tower at Jackson Memorial to house the adult emergency department, intensive care units, and the Miami Transplant Institute; the development of the Jackson West medical campus; overhauling the Jackson North and South campuses, and overall modernization of health system facilities.

Construction managers were encouraged to partner with local SBEs in a mentor/protégé relationship in order to provide on-the-job training in healthcare construction-management.

“Traditionally, the county has SBE-Cs on all projects; the percentage involved matches the scope of the work,” explained Clark. “But we decided that this was not enough—we wanted to develop new general contractors in the field of healthcare; to help companies overcome the numerous barriers that prevent them from getting into healthcare facility design and construction.”

“This was a first for Jackson,” he continued, adding that because the health system is an arm of Miami-Dade County, it

must remain race and gender neutral and could not request contractors to build in minority partnerships as part of their company profiles. "We did use mentorship language that encouraged contractors to bring on mentees that they would incorporate into their personnel, and we were pleased to see how many of them were excited about it."

✘ Foster Construction of South Florida is one of the SBE firms that benefitted from this approach. An African-American, woman-owned general contracting firm that specializes in publically funded projects, the firm is partnering with Turner Construction, which will act as a mentor to the firm. "We've had a relationship with Turner Construction for the past six years, and have partnered with them to pursue large-scale projects in the past; this is the first project that we have landed as a team," said Adrian Foster, president, Foster Construction. "We are really excited to receive an opportunity to pursue a project in the healthcare arena; it will add another notch to our level of expertise."

The contractors will be replacing the current rehabilitation hospital on campus, collaborating from pre-construction to close-out. Said Foster, "Being surrounded by such seasoned superintendents and project managers, the amount of knowledge we will gain is incalculable; and this knowledge will filter back to the rest of the company, enabling us to pursue our own healthcare projects in the future."

"After the project is completed, we hope that these companies will remain sustainable, which will increase the talent pool of those with healthcare construction experience in the area, as well as provide more competition to drive down costs," added Clark of the win-win nature of the training program. SBE-C protégé firms that were included in the solicitation process included four women-owned businesses, five African-American-owned businesses, and one Hispanic-owned business.

"As a contractor that has been in this community for many years, I really want to applaud Jackson and its team for putting together a program with teeth," said Foster. "They literally sat down and considered all of the possibilities to

ensure that companies like Foster who find it so difficult to break into the healthcare market would have a real platform to gain this level of experience. It's monumental for local contractors, and the community should feel good about how their money is being used to help out local businesses."

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