



WINTER 2021

Yosef Kebede Appointed Head of DPW Bureau of Water and Wastewater



Yosef Kebede

Congratulations to Yosef Kebede on his appointment as Head, Baltimore Department of Public Works (DPW) Bureau of Water and Wastewater in October 18, 2021.

Mr. Kebede leads 1,300 employees and is responsible for ensuring 1.8 million water and wastewater customers receive superior service. Mr. Kebede has 20 years of experience in organizational leadership, engineering consulting, construction management, marketing, and workforce development.

A strong advocate for small, minority and women-owned businesses, Mr. Kebede has been an ardent supporter of the DPW Small Business Development Growth By Design Program.

DPW Launches the 2021 Small Business Development *Growth By Design* 11-Week Training Program



The Baltimore City Department of Public Works Small Business Development *Growth By Design* Program (SBDP) launched its fifth cohort on Thursday, September 9, 2021. The ideal SBDP participant firms work in various disciplines including engineering, construction, concrete, hauling and landscaping.

For the second year, the SBDP is being held 100% virtually in response to COVID-19 protocols. As in previous cohorts, 2021 SBDP participant firms are receiving a comprehensive 11-week training curriculum. This year, a new course, Basic Blueprint Plan Reading has been added to enhance the offering.

"We remain fully committed to providing new avenues to support small and minority businesses," stated Deena Joyce, Chief of the Office of Boards and Commissions. The curriculum includes:

- **NEW** *Basic Blueprint Plan Reading*
- *Bonding*
- *Construction Cost Accounting*

- *Construction Best Practices*
- *Contract Administration*
- *Estimating & Bidding*
- *M/WBE Certification*
- *Pre-qualification with Baltimore City*
- *Proven Marketing Strategies*
- *OSHA 10 Hour Certification*

Participants convene virtually on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00pm-9:00pm. While Tuesday is dedicated to course content, Thursday is focused on fostering opportunities for the cohort to network with General Contractors and each other. The SBDP program is hosting General Contractor Networking Sessions to allow firms a chance to introduce their services and learn about upcoming contracting opportunities in the Baltimore Metropolitan Region.

"We're excited about this occasion to help develop new firms to not only compete on Baltimore City contracts but contracts throughout the region," stated Kerwen Whatley, Small Business Development Program Director.



At the ribbon cutting ceremony for the R.E. Harrington and Sons Apprenticeship Training Program are R.E. Harrington, Sr., Baltimore City Mayor Brandon C. Scott and Baltimore City Council President Nick Mosby (center) with other distinguished attendees.

R.E. Harrington & Sons Plumbing, Heating and Utilities Interview with Robert Harrington, Sr., President

Why does R.E. Harrington invest in the DPW Small Business Development Growth by Design Training Program?

When I was a young adult and a small business owner, I was blessed to have support from multiple adults and companies. They helped me grow with their advice on finances, knowledge, and friendship. This has helped me achieve what I have accomplished in my life. Because of all the support I have reached back to give support to other small businesses.

How many graduates of the DPW Small Business Development Growth by Design Training Program have you assisted? How many have been successful? How many are you still working with?

R.E. Harrington has assisted over twenty graduates with advice, resources, and small mentorship. Out of the twenty graduates we have worked with, three of the companies have managed to grow. R.E. Harrington looks forward to supporting them in their continued growth.

Why did you create the apprenticeship program?

R.E. Harrington created an apprenticeship program because there has been a major shift with the labor force in the construction field in the last ten years. Baltimore City trade schools have been struggling to get students to join trades in construction (plumbing, brick laying, HVAC, electrical, carpentry etc.).

All the associates that grew up with me in the construction trades realized that there wasn't a generation to follow behind us. As I ride through the city to check on projects and scout locations, I see young boys and girls hanging around with no sense of direction. Of the young adults that apply for employment, 99% of them have no skills at all to help the company grow.

It came to me that the only way to help my industry was to set up a program with Baltimore City Schools and come up with a unique one-of-a-kind training program that will make these young adults interested in the construction trades. I am pleased to

say that after three years, R.E. Harrington & Sons Trades Scholarship Foundation is a Maryland State approved training program.

What do you see as critical for residents and local, small businesses to be successful?

- Break up some of the large contracts to make smaller contracts for local businesses
- Create a bonding program for Baltimore small local businesses
- Institute prompt payment policy
- Create a joint venture to become more valuable to prime contractors to bid on projects
- Encourage large firms to provide mentorship programs
- Provide City incentives for helping small firms
- Small businesses must be able to perform and be an asset and not a liability



SZ PM Consultants Founder & President Suli Wang

Workforce Development with SZ PM Consultants, Inc.

When was SZ PM Consultants, Inc. formed?

SZ PM Consultants, Inc. (SZ PM) was incorporated on December 23, 2011.

Describe your service offerings and primary customers.

SZ PM is an engineering consulting firm. We provide project and program management, risk management, construction management, field QC inspections, project scheduling, QA/QC reviews, permitting support, agency and utility coordination, and water, wastewater, and stormwater engineering consulting services.

We serve the water, wastewater, and transportation industries. SZ PM's primary customers are the City of Baltimore, DC Water, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), District Department of Transportation (DDOT), Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

What support is your firm currently providing Baltimore City?

SZ PM is providing project controls for an "Electrical Distribution System Reliability Improvements at Patapsco WWTP" contract.

SZ PM will be providing engineering and design support to several additional "On Call Civil/Structure Engineering and Design Service" contracts. SZ PM has also provided engineering services to the contract for "Improvements to the Headworks and Wet Weather Flow Equalization at the Back River WWTP".

What training have you been able to provide to your employees as a result of these contracts?

As a result of these projects and contracts from other clients, SZ PM has been able to offer monthly Lunch and Learn sessions regarding various technical subjects. SZPM's employees have also been provided opportunities to attend external technical trainings and team building events.

How do you recruit and retain new employees to help support your business?

Most of our hires are referred to us by our employees and professional connections. We also post positions on Indeed.com, LinkedIn.com and through Baltimore City local hiring advertising, as needed. To retain employees, we arrange professional development opportunities, provide challenging projects to employees, and offer open access to communicate with the upper management team at any time.

Why is it important to invest in developing your employees?

It is extremely important to invest in developing my employees because they are the most valuable assets we have. We want all employees to have opportunities to grow professionally and feel appreciated for the effort that they put in towards the team environment.



Lessons Learned with Webhawkx Technologies

When was Webhawkx formed?

WebHawkx was formed in 2014. When I started the company, I worked part-time as I was in the peak of my career as an Application Technology Consultant at HP (Hewlett Packard). It was hard to quit my full-time job and start working for my own company but eventually I did and started working full-time for WebHawkx in June 2017.

Describe your primary services.

WebHawkx provides Program Management Services, Construction Management, Construction Inspection Services, Asset Management, Conditional Assessment, Project Controls Services, and Information Technology Services.

What have been the primary challenges that you have encountered?

During the pandemic, most of our clients have not been meeting with us in person. For small businesses like us, it is very important to continuously market to bring in new business. However, due to COVID-19, it was very hard to meet with new clients.

WebHawkx always tries to provide the best benefits package for WebHawkx employees. Currently, Health Benefits are very expensive and it is difficult for small-businesses to offer comprehensive health plans. We heavily invest to provide excellent benefits to all our employees to acknowledge their hard work.

After what you have experienced, how did you approach things differently?

I embraced a culture of forward thinking. We quickly changed our business development techniques and used technology to keep connecting with our existing and prospective clients.



Muhammad Irfan Shahzad
President, WebHawkx Technologies
MDOT, City of Baltimore, PG County
Certified MBE Firm.

Some of these ideas included:

- Using online RFP tracking services to track project announcements, awarded contracts, detailed project histories, and industry-related news.
- Keeping connected with clients using online meeting services such as WebEx and a CRM (Customer Relationship Management Services) such as Insightly.
- Establishing relationships with the Health Care Agent to provide us the right options to offer comparative health care rates and invested in our employees by providing good benefits, equipped with technology (laptops, phone and software) and trainings to enhance their capabilities.

What advice would you offer other small firms about pivoting and expanding their service offerings?

Advice I would suggest:

- Offer services in the area where you have good technical experience and have strong past performances. Think how you can bring value to a client or partner company.
- Don't hesitate to work on small contracts. These small contracts help you to get your foot in the door.
- Perform market analysis to evaluate the market demand, know your competitors and similar service providers.

- Establish a relationship with your Banker for loans, Attorney for legal advice and a CPA for tax complications. Most importantly, if applicable, get certified as an MBE/SBE/DBE company and be ready to bid by getting pre-qualified with the City of Baltimore. The DPW Small Business Growth By Design Program is the best program to learn about all these items.

How did the DPW Small Business Development Growth By Design Program benefit your firm?

The DPW *Growth by Design* Small Business Program allowed us to understand the pertinent aspects of our business. We learned important concepts such as Bonding and Working Capital, SBA, OSHA10, networking with Prime companies and understanding the City of Baltimore's procurement process, MBE process and pre-qualification process.

The program not only helped us to understand Construction Management, Asset Management, Project Scheduling, and DPW Water and Sewer program needs, but also helped us to meet and establish the connections with Baltimore City program leaders.



After we attended this program, WebHawkx was ready to bid on City contracts by obtaining our MBE and pre-qualification certificate from the City. We work with various Primes and were able to secure a City contract to provide "Program Management Services for Baltimore's Water Main Replacement Program".

In a nutshell, the DPW *Growth by Design* Small Business Development Program team is very proactive and knowledgeable and they are always helpful to our company by providing guidance on how to connect with the right people.