

Exclusive Interview with Skanska USA Building, Inc.'s Tyra L. Redus

1. Tell us about your journey to become Skanska USA Building, Regional Vendor Diversity Director?

My journey in the construction industry began 10 years ago in Kentucky when I transitioned from practicing law. I joined the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) as the Executive Director of the Office of Civil Rights and Small Business Development to lead the agency's federal Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program and workforce development initiatives for the Commonwealth's largest infrastructure project at the time. Here, I found my passion as a change agent and advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion work.

In 2016 seeking a change and new challenges, I relocated to Washington DC and joined the District Department of Transportation as the Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer. In this role I was able to build on the great experience I gained at KYTC and continue to advocate for inclusion of small, minority and women-owned businesses in construction contracting.

A year and half ago I got the opportunity to join Skanska as the regional vendor diversity director for the Mid-Atlantic. Skanska is a company that lives its values in and out of the office, which includes a commitment to diversity and inclusion. At Skanska, it is not just about awarding subcontracts to minority businesses to meet contractual goals, but there is a concentrated effort on building strong partnerships and relationships with minority businesses through development, training, and contract awards. Skanska offers mentor/protégé programs, superintendent training, and a business training program that strengthens businesses and builds capacity. This program, established more than 15 years ago, called Construction Management Building Blocks (CMBB) offers minority subcontractors valuable knowledge and insight into not only being successful on Skanska projects, but also what it takes to be a successful business in the construction industry. To date, more than 800 companies have graduated from the program and more than \$250 million in contracts have been awarded to program graduates. This program is offered across the country and I am excited to announce we will be offering a CMBB here in Maryland later this spring.

2. What are your duties and responsibilities?

As the lead for the Mid-Atlantic Region, I collaborate with senior leaders and management to fulfill Skanska's values and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. I am responsible for organizing outreach events and representing Skanska in the minority, women, and disadvantaged business enterprise (MWDBE) community for intentional engagement during project planning and construction phases. I also manage and advise on project-specific MWDBE compliance issues for all projects in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

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3. How has having a Law Degree assist you in your job?

My legal background and past litigation experience has given me key transferable skills such as problem solving, advocacy, critical thinking and the ability to understand contractual requirements. These skills have helped me to effectively support our Skanska teams and clients' MWDBE programs and compliance requirements on our projects.

4. Your position is responsible for construction project coverage in DC Metro, Philadelphia Metro, Virginia, and North Carolina. Wow, that's a large territory to keep track of the various Federal, State and Local disadvantage business protocol programs. Which areas have the strongest compliance requirements and how do you keep track of it all?

The Mid-Atlantic region is a large territory, but my past experience administering the federal DBE programs at the state and local level has given me an advantage in keeping track of the various programs and their requirements. In prior roles, I was exposed to various federal, state and local MWDBE programs on the owner's side and of course, working in the District I became very familiar with the regional disadvantaged business programs in Maryland, Virginia and DC.

Each of the programs in the Mid-Atlantic region have different areas where they are strongest due to the fact that each state or local program is at a different stage in development. Maryland's program is very robust in terms of the contractual requirements, like good faith efforts and overall compliance. DC and Virginia's programs are more expansive in terms of including small businesses. North Carolina's program has been around a long time and it has had really good success in requiring Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) participation on all state and locally funded projects, which has helped North Carolina build capacity and grow successful HUB firms.

5. How do you treat disputes between disadvantage business owned contractors and the prime contractors that you have hired to perform the work? Do you let them work it out or get involved to attempt to restore civility? Do you review their contracts to ensure that they are following the local area's disadvantage business protocol?

At Skanska, our goal is to avoid disputes by resolving any potential conflicts early that could negatively impact the project and/or our subcontractors. It does not happen often but on those occasions when a problem might escalate into a dispute, Skanska has a straightforward, fair and rapid response program for dispute resolution. Disputes can be verbal or written and can be submitted to me, as the vendor diversity lead or the Skanska project manager for mediation.

Skanska's dispute resolution process has three distinct steps. First, there is a focused collaboration that includes a discussion of the issue with the MWDBE contractor and myself or the project manager. This is the point in the process where I will review the MWDBE's contract with the prime subcontractor as part of our discussion. If we are not able to reach

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resolution at this step, next there is a discussion with the MWDBE contractor, myself, the project manager and an owner representative. Finally, if we are still unable to reach a resolution, we will introduce a third-party mediator and include the MWDBE contractor, myself, the Skanska account manager, and project manager.

When these disputes arise, we hope that we don't have to get to the step of introducing a mediator because Skanska's goal is always to resolve the issue fairly and as quickly as possible. In the past, dispute cases have been resolved during the first or second steps.

Skanska sees this process as an important part of building relationships and partnerships with MWDBE contractors on our projects and this is one of the ways we live out our company values and ensure all of our subcontractors feel supported.

6. What are some of the hardest trade areas to fill among the various vertical building projects that Skanska manages?

The hardest trade areas to fill are mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP). These trades represent a significant portion of construction work and with each project we find it is very challenging to get MWDBE firms to bid this work. Skanska has identified these trades as areas of opportunity and through mentor/protégé and development programs, we are focused on helping organizations like MWMCA recruit, develop and build capacity for minority and women owned MEP firms.

7. Who is your hero and why?

I don't really have just one hero. There are so many phenomenal trailblazers who have come before me and inspiring young people who I know will continue to carry the torch in this space. My heroes are people who make a decision every day to keep going despite their past and present challenges, and they fight to live out their purpose in the most authentic way possible. You never know who you are inspiring and who just might inspire you, so at the end of the day, we can all be heroes.