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## Driving a New Small Business Agenda

*This past spring, McGraw-Hill Construction convened its third annual industry roundtable on the issues confronting Minority and Women Business Enterprises. With over 60 industry professionals from all market sectors in attendance, the conversation resonated with news of the recently released draft of the New York State Disparity Study, adoption of the new NYC Public Sector Project Labor Agreements, the importance of Mentor Programs, the pending MTA Mentorship program and the next steps needed to create parity for small and MWBE businesses in the current construction market. Paul T. Williams, DASNY's President, hosted the session and Carra Wallace, Managing Director of Executive Initiatives, facilitated the discussion.*

*A summary of the NYS Disparity Study was provided by Paul T. Williams and the report is expected to have far reaching ramifications over the next several years as new legislation is put in place. This is a material contribution towards the development of a bona fide level playing field for small business, especially minority and women entrepreneurs. The event discussion was both comprehensive and engaging, thanks to Carra Wallace, who has been recognized for her initiatives in implementing a new management culture at DASNY.*

*Wallace framed several questions which guided the group discussion, such as: With a challenging economy, does the Study come too late in the game? Will the New York State Legislature pick up speed this session and incorporate a new business agenda by implementing new guidelines for Article 15-A? Will a new governor in 2011 add the legs to legislation that must open the doors wider for small business throughout New York State?*



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Roundtable participants agreed that the NYS Disparity Study ([www.esd.ny.gov/MWBE.html](http://www.esd.ny.gov/MWBE.html)) confirmed what participants knew to be the case. "New York has been a difficult environment for MWBEs to operate," said B. Seth Bryant, Managing Partner with newly-established law firm, Bryant Burgher Jaffe & Roberts LLP.

"I am confident that the Disparity Study gives us the data to work with agencies to set enforceable goals," said Michael Jones-Bey, Empire State Development Corporation's Director of the Division of Minority and Women Owned Business Development. "The governor's MWBE legislation, expected to pass this session, should give us the legal authority to create incentives and sanctions that will allow us to replicate what we have seen in other states with successful programs. Since 2008, we have made important strides in MWBE participation in the financial sector, thanks to the leadership of Paul Williams and the Governor's MWBE Task Force. In addition, the Division of Minority and Women's Business Development has also developed successful initiatives to increase MWBE participation in industries like Technology and the Green sector. However, it's safe to say that New York will unveil a more robust program that will help MWBEs for generations to come."

Reverend Jacques A. DeGraff, second Vice President of 100 Black Men, who also serves as the lead advocate for the MWBE Business Leadership Council confirmed, "We all could have told the State anecdotally what they have now told us statistically about evidence of discrimination in state contracting procedures."