



**For Immediate Release:** Thursday, April 16, 2015

**Contact:**

Jasmine Baker | [jasmine.baker@esd.ny.gov](mailto:jasmine.baker@esd.ny.gov) | (800) 260-7313

ESD Press Office | [pressoffice@esd.ny.gov](mailto:pressoffice@esd.ny.gov) | (800) 260-7313

**EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT AND COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY HOST  
MWBE/SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCE EXPO**

*Expo showcases New York State programs and initiatives to help small businesses grow*

*Hundreds from small business community registered for the event*

Empire State Development (ESD) and Columbia University, in conjunction with the Columbia-Harlem Small Business Development Center, today announced that they will host an MWBE/Small Business Resource Expo to help minority and women-owned (MWBE) and small businesses grow and thrive in New York State. The event will be held on Columbia's campus in the Alfred Lerner Hall tomorrow, Friday, April 17 from 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Alphonso B. David, Counsel to the Governor, will deliver the keynote address at the event, highlighting the Governor's MWBE program and strategies that the State will use to meet the Governor's 30 percent MWBE utilization goal, the highest state MWBE contracting goal in the nation.

"Growing New York State's economy continues to be a top priority for the Governor, and a key element of improving and sustaining the State's economic strength depends on the success of thousands of MWBEs located throughout New York State," said Mr. David. "ESD's Regional MWBE Expo Series is one of many tools that the State uses to provide business owners with information about the Governor's MWBE program and State contracting opportunities. We encourage all business owners and entrepreneurs, who are interested in the becoming a certified MWBE or learning more about the State's procurement process, to attend."

In addition to a full day of expert panels and instructional workshops, ESD representatives and Columbia University staff will provide on-the ground financial and technical assistance on the MWBE certification process, employment readiness, finance and business development, as well as retail and construction subcontracting opportunities at Columbia's Manhattanville campus.

"Small businesses are essential to New York's economy, accounting for 43 percent of private sector employment and 35 percent of private sector wages," said ESD President, CEO and Commissioner Howard Zemsky. "We are dedicated to ensuring continued growth in this critical

sector, and initiatives like the Small Business Resource Expo will go a long way towards providing the necessary resources to make starting and growing businesses in New York State easier than ever.”

"The Columbia-Harlem Small Business Development Center takes enormous pride in helping businesses evolve and grow," said Kaaryn Nailor Simmons, Director, Columbia-Harlem Small Business Development Center. "Through our partnership with the government we are able to add capacity to small- and mid-sized businesses, which ultimately helps create jobs and support the local economy of Upper Manhattan."

"Columbia has been and will continue to be a strong proponent of minority, women and local business enterprises. It makes sense for our business model to have high-performing firms nearby to assist with all that we do," said Joe Ienuso, Executive Vice President of Columbia University Facilities and Operations. "Working hand-in-hand with the state, we can refer MWLBE firms to the state when those firms need assistance, whether that is with bonding and insurance, financing or certification. Today's resource expo is just another example of the ways that we partner to assist MWLBE firms."

New York State has numerous programs available that are dedicated to helping entrepreneurs and small business owners gain access to capital, tap into contracting opportunities, and start and expand their businesses in New York State.

Staff from the State's [Division of Minority Women and Business Development](#), which is dedicated to promoting equality of economic opportunities for MWBEs and eliminating barriers to their participation in state contracts, will discuss state contracting opportunities for MWBE businesses in the upcoming Columbia Manhattanville campus expansion. Since Governor Cuomo took office in 2011, MWBE utilization has more than doubled, increasing in FY 2013 - 2014 to 25 percent and exceeding the Governor's goal of 20 percent for the first time in the State's history. The Governor raised the bar even higher in 2014, setting the goal to 30 percent, the highest such target in the nation for any state government. Harlem Community Development Corporation, an ESD subsidiary, will be present to explain the New York State MWBE certification process to those businesses looking to identify new opportunities and tap into the State's growing pool of MWBE firms and businesses. Analysts from Harlem CDC's MWBE Satellite office will screen potential applicants through a pre-certification eligibility review and set appointments for application assistance.

[Business Mentor NY](#), the State's first large scale, hands-on business mentoring program, will join the Division of Minority and Women's Business Development at the Expo. Business Mentor NY connects volunteers working in the private sector to small businesses and MWBEs to help them address specific challenges and obstacles to success.

Information will also be available for the [Bridge to Success Program](#), which expands access to short-term loans for MWBEs and state contractors, providing qualified MWBEs with the short-

term resources needed to access the up to \$1 billion in contracting opportunities with New York State.

For more information about the Expo schedule, [click here](#).

###