



Office of Civil Rights

South American Engineering Family Thrives Upgrading California's Infrastructure

Caltrans Office of Civil Rights spotlights Hispanic Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Polo Engineering as part of a series showcasing Caltrans' subcontractors' diversity.

A three-generation South American Engineering family is now thriving as they provide traffic signals, roadway lighting, highway guardrails, or storm water drainage to repair and upgrade California's aging transportation system.

Daniel Polo was born in Ecuador in 1976. After moving to California in 2000, he and his wife—whose family emigrated from Cuba—began laying the foundation for what would become an American family legacy in engineering. They married in 2005 and began working on high-end residential and commercial projects, steadily building expertise in complex construction work.

In 2018, the couple officially launched [POLO Engineering, Inc.](#), bringing together their engineering knowledge and a shared passion for public infrastructure. Their breakthrough into public works came just a year later, thanks to a valuable introduction to Caltrans and their local District 5 Small Business Liaison (DSBL), Jessica Biro.



"Jessica gave me a list of things to research, and I went down a rabbit hole," said Polo Engineering President Jennifer Polo. "I watched a lot of videos and webinars that literally provided the steps small businesses need to take to get a contract. It's overwhelming at first. Now it's just up to the small business to pursue it."

That pursuit paid off. Through guidance from their DSBL and learning about the [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise \(DBE\) program](#), which helps level the playing field for historically underrepresented business owners, Polo Engineering expanded its horizons. The DBE designation allowed the firm to compete in a space often dominated by legacy contractors.

In 2020, Daniel Polo earned the company's General A contractor license, enabling the firm to transition

from private to public sector work. They hit the ground running—submitting 28 Caltrans Minor B project bids, then landing four contracts.

“Minor B projects are a great place for small businesses to enter the contracting world of Caltrans and decide whether or not they can become a prime,” Jennifer noted. She emphasized the importance of factoring in compliance and prevailing wage requirements when bidding.

“Without the DBE program, we wouldn’t have an opportunity against these businesses who have been doing this for years, decades, or even centuries,” she said. “Each of our Caltrans projects helps us grow and improve our company and meet the strict compliance and documentation standards. We welcome these challenges because we stand shoulder to shoulder with some of the largest builders in the world who work with Caltrans.”

Today, Polo Engineering is a testament to grit, family values, and the opportunities that public programs can offer to those ready to take the leap. Their work not only improves California’s roads—it also paves the way for the next generation of diverse contractors in public infrastructure.

Visit Caltrans’ Civil Rights program webpage to get certified as a [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise](#), or visit the Department of General Services [Cal eProcure](#) website for information on [Small Business Certification](#).