



Office of Civil Rights

From Playing with Rocks to Being a Rock

Caltrans Office of Civil Rights is spotlighting Subcontinent Asian American Jinesh Mehta to showcase Caltrans' contractors' diversity.

When Jinesh Mehta was a child, he played with “[grit](#)” at his dad’s small business in India. Now he works with grit for a living, working as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), inspecting, evaluating, and testing materials, and engineering solutions for Caltrans.

“[Grit](#) is a word that describes me,” Mehta said. “I am a passionate pursuer of finding the best solutions for the client and I want to build a workforce that has the same grit. My mission is to have a Growth mindset, Resilience, Ingenuity, and Tenacity [GRIT].”

Mehta earned his Master of Science degree in construction materials from [Purdue University](#) in 2004. After working for Alta Vista Solutions for more than a decade, Atlas Technical Consultants bought the company. Since Mehta enjoyed being part of a small firm where he could affect change, he decided to start his own small business. He named it [Grit Force Inc.](#) after the materials used in concrete, and the strength of character he has a reputation for.



Grit Force Inc. inspects structures, with the goal to address issues while they are small. If large safety concerns are discovered, structures are closed to the traveling public while they are repaired.

Mehta won his first – and second – Caltrans contract on August 9, 2023. One was an emergency project to conduct steel bridge ultrasonic testing across California. The other contract called for technical specialist engineering services for Caltrans.

He said the biggest challenge was the unpredictability of the projects’ delivery dates.

“It was definitely nerve-wracking,” Mehta said. “I knew I needed to deliver, but I didn’t know when.”

He said his previous work at Alta Vista, familiarized him with the Caltrans’ [Look Ahead report](#), and

strategizing, and selecting a team for each contract. He shares his work with other firms, which he says helps develop trust and relationships.

He also credits his success to Caltrans' processes.

“Caltrans is a big, mature organization with standardized processes, so there are no surprises. If you have the qualifications, and you can put a good team together, you have a fair shot at doing Caltrans [Architectural and Engineering] A&E work.”

He said he’s learned to spend time doing his research during his initial screening. He recommends that new small businesses try various options, cast a wide net, and follow through on all commitments to develop a solid reputation. He gets 50% of the jobs he does a Statement of Qualifications for.

“If you’re starting a new business, DBE certification might help to get your foot in the door, but merit and excellence carry the torch forward,” Mehta said.

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](#).