



Office of Civil Rights

Navigating a Changing Contracting Landscape

Caltrans Office of Civil Rights spotlights Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Bayside Engineering Construction Inc. owner Luis Rivero as part of a series showcasing Caltrans' subcontractors' diversity.

Bayside Engineering Construction Inc. owner Luis Rivero, a Hispanic small-business leader whose path from immigrant student to federal contractor reflects the opportunities and challenges facing Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in California.

Rivero, born in Caracas, Venezuela, moved to Washington with his family in 1980. After earning an engineering scholarship from the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, he completed bachelor's and master's degrees in civil and environmental engineering at Washington State University.

He later relocated to San Diego, managing projects for the Department of Defense, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Department of Energy before launching Bayside in 2018. The firm is certified as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Minority Business Enterprise, and is part of the federal SBA 8(a) program.

A Caltrans Business Services Manager helped introduce Bayside to state contracting opportunities, connecting the firm with the Calmentor Mentor-Protégé Program. Bayside went on to support construction, natural resources, hazardous materials, and abatement projects across several Caltrans districts.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Rivero pivoted his business to nationwide disinfection services, developing health and safety protocols aligned with CDC and OSHA guidance. Bayside completed nearly 200 task orders—many for Caltrans facilities and federal installations—while maintaining a zero-incident safety record. Rivero has also returned to his academic roots: the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, which once awarded him a scholarship, later elected him vice president of corporate affairs for its San Diego chapter.



But even with these successes, Rivero says the landscape for DBEs is shifting.

He notes that Bayside has not yet experienced operational impacts from the ongoing DBE program reevaluation. In fact, Bayside participated as a teaming partner on a Caltrans contract after the new federal rules took effect, leveraging its DBE certification to secure opportunities and build relationships with prime contractors.

Rivero said he believes the expanded definition of eligible economically disadvantaged firms may make it harder for “traditional” DBEs to compete.

“I understand the inclusion of all types of economically challenged firms,” Rivero said, “but primes may opt for the new, nontraditional DBEs, because there is still stigma associated with firms owned by various races or genders.”

Before Bayside, most of Rivero’s experience was in federal contracting, where he continues to secure 8(a) competitive and direct-award work with agencies such as the Navy, HUD, BLM, and USACE. Today, Caltrans contracts make up about 11 percent of Bayside’s revenue—growth he attributes largely to the firm’s District 7 on-call contract with Geosyntec.

Rivero said pursuing Caltrans work requires significant time spent on marketing, proposal development, and administrative compliance. But he hopes the experience will help expand Bayside’s share of the state transportation market.

“My goal has always been to find ways to keep our crew working and to continue growing,” he said. “I’m proud of my heritage, and I try to do everything I can to help my community succeed.”

For more information about DBE certification, visit the [Caltrans Civil Rights Program webpage](#) or the Department of General Services [Cal eProcure](#) site for Small Business Certification.