

AACCNJ 2020 SBBRAP Jersey City & Camden Testimonials

BAM Electric Contracting

“The class was so organized and definitely put together with Small Businesses as the focus. The attentiveness the instructors and special guest gave was priceless. Joanne took a personal interest in our success and tirelessly advocated on our behalf. I can't thank the AACCNJ enough for hosting the class. The knowledge I've gained over those 8 weeks helped me to be a confident business woman and for that I'm forever grateful.”

-Melissa Blair

Barrco Enterprises

“The bonding program as a whole was a great experience for our business. We came into the program knowing very little in regards to the bonding process, what they were or even where to get them. Now I'm able to sit in a public webinar and understand all of the concepts and terms when they're speaking about bonding and so many other topics covered in class. I feel really prepared to take on this realm of public contracts and I wouldn't have that knowledge without this wonderful program. Thank you all.”

-Kelshall Alleyne, Chief Operations Officer, Barrco Enterprises LLC

CurrentMaster Electric Contractors and Consultants

“I want to share my experiences and let you know that I learned and benefited from this SBBRAP program.

The most encouraging moment when Joanne Brooks told me during the interview “You are managing, not crafting. You are a manager, not an electrician. You will do very well with this program “... it really made me proud of my decision to be the owner of an electrical contractor company. I attended the classes in Camden City and I am impressed by all the detail efforts you put in. You arranged the classroom location which is very convenient and safe, you prepared always nice warm meals before the class and you invited all the instructors whom are very helpful with most useful up-to-date knowledge and industry information. I also met with some amazing classmates who are contractors. We stay in touch and look forward to working together in the future.

Thank you so much, Joanne, Mary, CanDice, everyone in the African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ and all the instructors teaching and sharing in this program. I am very grateful.”

-Chun-ling Fan (Lynn Fan), CurrentMaster Electric Contractors and Consultants

Detail Oriented Contracting:

“I would like to express my appreciation of the **Small Business Bonding Readiness Assistant Program** given by the African American chamber of Commerce of New Jersey/NJ EDA/ JSSB Consulting. This amazing class has blown away my expectations. Before completing this class, I was under the impression that I knew how to conduct business accordingly and there was not much to teach me, as I have years of contracting experience under my belt, I was WRONG. This class has opened my eyes, to not only bonding readiness, but to professional holes in my business I can improve on, untapped potential I can monetize on, and how to handle myself and my business in a more professional manner to my clients and potential clients. This class has not only challenged me but also surrounded me with like-minded individuals who have shared knowledge and inspired me to work harder and stay the path, as I am working the right way towards a bigger goal. I would highly recommend this class to anyone. I

would like to thank Joanne Brooks, Mary Griffin, CanDice Miller and of course my fellow colleagues. Also, a big thank you to all the professionals that took time to come and educate us all!"

-Breitner Ermeus, Detail Oriented Contracting LLC

D.S.Rodrigues Construction

I am writing to give thanks for the Bond Readiness class. The wisdom that was imparted to me by the gracious staff has helped to keep my company out of trouble. The insights I have gleaned from the class have seeded my company for a successful future.

Construction contracting is an extremely challenging industry. Most construction contractors fail quickly, some fail spectacularly, others are failing and don't even know it. No company is invincible - only as good as its most recent success - which shouldn't be enjoyed too much anyway because as the old saying goes, "pride cometh before the fall."

The critical skills to master - safety; craft; regulations; operations; legal documentation; collections; credit and finance; labor relations - each of these just as important as the next; all were discussed at length in the class, and the caliber of each instructor was outstanding.

My heartfelt gratitude goes out to Ms. Joanne Brooks; Mr. Reginal Jarvis; Ms. Candice Miller; Ms. Mary Griffin; the instructors and supporting agencies and staff.

My company is now bondable. Its journey in the construction contracting industry is but three years old, but if I apply the lessons learned from this class, there is a very good chance that my company will thrive.

Thank you! SBBRAP; JSSB Consulting; African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey and NJ EDA

Sincerely,
Daniel S. Rodrigues

Eagle Federal Construction

"I started off not believing that this class could help me as I knew I had some things on my credit that required some attention. I was given advice and the tools to address my issues and get myself through the bonding process. The energy that Ms. Brooks and Mr. Jarvis brought to the class was amazing. They held us accountable and made sure we were taking advantage of the opportunities that were there. This class was great and really changed things for my business going forward. I would recommend it to anyone. It is a blessing to have support from people that understand. I would like to thank everyone involved and tell you all to keep doing what you are doing. Oh, and the food wasn't bad either."

-Sheena Jones

Exquisite Property Services

“The bonding program has been a great opportunity to learn how to best build my company's viability through industry specific experts. I learned about more than just bonding. I learned how to better classify my business, how to evaluate its growth and how to build its capacity for further growth. Most importantly, I learned that "it is a marathon, not a sprint." You all went above and beyond to make the experience meaningful both professionally and personally. Beyond customary hospitality, you all made it obvious that you were committed to all our businesses' success. That meant a lot.

In the same breath, I am disappointed that towards the end of the program, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted my family and business in remarkable ways that pulled me away from class... The financial impact has been difficult as I have closed my business but do not qualify for many of the funding opportunities made available through SBA.

While these are difficult times, I am optimistic and have faith in God. I felt compelled to reach out as I would be remiss not to express my sincere gratitude for the incredible experience and further express my regret for missing some of the invaluable material that was provided. I appreciate the tremendous opportunity it was to participate in the program and hope to continue to stay in contact. I cannot thank you all enough for everything. Be safe.”

-Karima Jackson, Exquisite Property Services

GetDiggy Excavating

“We would like to take a moment to share with everyone that has made a tremendous impact in our companies growing success and has informed us with the information necessary and tools needed to properly build not just a company but a legacy. It has been a pleasant and delightful journey and honor to be invited to the many events and accepted to attend the Small Business Readiness Assistance Program. My wife and I were greeted by Vice President, Member Relations and Programs of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey Ms. Mary Griffin. We followed her direction comfortably as she spoke with confidence. Ms. Griffin made the first impression on us and our company representing the Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey assuring us that there was nothing that we should be weary of and that we were in the good hands of individuals that were trustworthy, intelligent, prideful and most of all everyone has integrity. She would introduce us to her colleagues if we would accept an invite to join her team at an upcoming event. We accepted the invite which we would find out later was one of the most prosperous decisions that has been made on our journey to build our small business into a one-day corporation.

At the function we had the pleasure to meet and greet personally with some of the most influential people in our business sector. We enjoyed the presentation of Ms. Joanne Brooks, Esq not only did she do a great job that evening but the momentum never slowed down as she continued to breathe life into the class weekly. We remained enthused throughout the weeks to follow when our company was selected to attend the Bonding readiness Class that commenced in Jersey City, on February 10, 2020. When Ms. Joanne’s presentation concluded, Mr. Jarvis did an exceptional presentation superbly presenting Bonding readiness. We enjoyed the presenters that followed through the ZOOM platform effectively due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Dexter Hendricks from Turner Construction, Simeon Terry of Austin Commercial, Leon Baptiste, Rob Lee, Simeon Terry of Austin Commercial were knowledgeable. The COVID-19 Pandemic did have an impact on the class which prohibited us to meet greet and comingle at class but the tools that further became available provided just as much interaction with the presenters and generals as if we were all still in class.

Ms. CanDice Miller was also impressive because I knew firsthand of how easily everything could have gotten disarrayed if she would have dropped the ball in communicating. The COVID-19 pandemic made what could have been a simple task more challenging. We never had any ambiguities personally nor as a

company during the weeks of class. Thank you, Ms. Miller for assisting me with navigating through the technical issues that we were experiencing when accessing the meetings through ZOOM.

Simply put, GetDiggy as a small business starting out had the rare opportunity to be seated at the table and experience firsthand what it takes not just to lead but to do so united. Personally, I witnessed with my spouse our company growth in weeks. Knowledge, patience, and networking made things happen for our company that could have taken years for us to achieve.

Founder, President & CEO Mr. John E. Harmon, Sr. was none other than a Lion leading the Lions that has been willing to share with those less fortunate, offering us all a seat at his table. It has and continues to be a wonderful experience for all of us here at GetDiggy Excavating. Again, our business did prosper after attending the classes. Why bonding matters spoke of itself, Union vs Workshop was an area that we were betwixt on months before we attended the class. While doing the class the information presented made all the difference on the way that we have approached every job. Construction Accounting made an impact to the way we were going about the accounts, Managing growth was another class that made a difference in our job task because the information did not go over our heads and that's what we are currently in pursuit now to achieve and once achieved how do we properly manage it.

I would recommend any business of any size that is serious about their company maximizing its capacity to reach out to the African American Chambers of Commerce of New Jersey.

I do now realize that the testimonial is long-winded but I couldn't stop writing as the journey played throughout our heads and the impact that the classes had/has on our small business venture. Once our company reaches its full capacity (which is unknown) we will not just give good service we would be well equipped to provide excellent services.”

-Jack & Monesha Grant

JC Custom Design & Build LLC

“When I was sponsored for the business bonding readiness program by Carol Fulton I was not sure what to expect. My first initial dinner/conference I have to say I was a bit discouraged because I was not sure if I would qualify for getting into the program. I spoke with Joanne Brooks, John Harmon and Dexter Hendricks that night and all assured me that this program was for me based on my experience. I prayed about it and after submitting paperwork and having phone conferences I was accepted into the program. I believe that God gives us opportunities and places us where we are supposed to be, but it is with our obedience of taking action and doing what we are supposed to do that we see the full blessing of what God has in store for us.

I want to thank Mary Griffin, Nicole Baptiste, CanDice Miller and Joanne Brooks for all of their hard work. This class was above and beyond what I expected and the opportunities that were put in our path for our businesses will help to guide us and grow. Not only did this class create opportunities for networking but it also gave us the tools that we need to have our businesses succeed. For me personally, before this class, I did not even think about being bonded since I was blessed over the past year and a half doing commercial work and not needing it. But throughout the class Joanne made it very clear of how important it is to be bonded especially if we want to grow and she gave us opportunities to speak with contractors, lawyers and others to further our knowledge for our businesses.

I want to give a special shoutout to Reggie Jarvis with all of his help in getting bonding and showing us what we need to do to make it possible.

If there was an opportunity to take this class again I would do it in a heartbeat. I was actually so impressed with all of the opportunities and help along the way that after our last class I joined the African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ on the phone with Mary Griffin.

Thank you again, for all of your hard work and dedication to the Chamber and to this program.

-Collen O'Neill

Katsu Technologies, Inc.

"The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey small business bonding program was one of the most informative programs offered by any of the small business development programs offered in New Jersey. When I complete all the requirements, I am confident that it will propel my business to a new level of success. I am already viewing Request for Proposals through a whole new level of understandings and I am less likely to waste my time or make mistakes that would only diminish my reputation and that of my business.

The challenges for African American businesses are great and we need every tool available to us. I recommend this Program to anyone interesting serious contracting."

-Dwight Epps, Chief Executive Officer, Katsu Technologies Inc.

Paton Bros

"The process front to end offered was exceptional and professional beginning with the initial phone call, to interview process, and communications. Our company felt the dedication and commitment that the AACCNJ had to its students in this course. They showed a great reflection of what the commerce is all about. Our company felt the material presented in our classes were relevant to taking the companies to the next level. The topics discussed aren't commonly taught to the public but necessities to many company's growth. We also greatly appreciate the swift adjustment to online learning amidst the pandemic. The transition didn't affect the quality and commitment of the AACCNJ team one bit in facilitating this course. Thank you, team especially CanDice, Mary, Joanne, and instructors for being there for us and committing to excellence of the students in the class. ~Lahwah."

-Paton Bros LLC

Perfectionist Painting & Contracting LLC

"I am beyond proud and excited to finally be able to state that my company is officially bonded. Completing the Small Business Bonding Readiness Assistance Program offered by the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey and NJEDA proved itself to be an overall great business decision. I have to commend the clear direct approach of the instructions given in the class from day one. Right from the start the class helped me figure out where I stand in the process and exactly where I needed to be in order to be qualified and become bonded. My mindset quickly shifted from wondering if I will ever be bonded to knowing it would happen it was just a matter of time.

I could not write this without saying a special thank you to my instructor Joanne Brooks. She not only shared her wealth of knowledge about the surety industry with us but created a great structured learning environment. At the beginning of every class she would refer to the "Plan your work and work your plan," a chart that detail the steps to success. I also want to thank Reggie Jarvis for working with me one on one providing me with both guidance and specific instructions on how to position myself and my company to ensure the ultimate outcome of becoming bonded. Personally, I want to acknowledge Mary Griffin and the African American Chamber of Commerce for facilitating and

supporting this program. Mary and CanDice were in attendance at every class. Mary was asking for our feedback on the class and topic covered and after the classes ended, she continued to be a resource emailing us information on subjects that could be of benefit to our business. CanDice stayed on top of us to make sure we followed through.

Thanks to taking this class I am not only bonded but I have the opportunity to bid on larger projects, network and develop new relationships with class participants, instructors and industry professionals from various background. In fact, I have already got a direct referral from a classmate and in the process of setting up a Joint venture with another.”

-Olrick Harding, Perfectionist Painting & Contracting LLC.

Principle IX Associates, LLC

“I would like first to commend The African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ (AACCNJ) for their insight and leadership in pursuit of a program so vital and intricate for Minority and Small businesses today's Engineering / Construction business industry environment. Second the level of precision and quality of the program's Principal Ms. Joanne Brooks and Associates was of the highest and refreshing level of professional performance and conduct that I have not come across in quite a while...This was not any "Rubber Stamp" program, my batteries have been recharged. In addition, the instructors, attorneys, contractors, and classmate relationships were first rate.

I also like to give a special thank you to Ms. CanDice Miller who did not allow my firm to fall through the cracks.”

-Aaron Bethea, Executive Director, Principle IX Associates, LLC

Property Maintenance Guys

“As contractor who is constantly looking to improve and get to the next level, this is thus far the best class I have taken. Because I wasted so much time taking other classes and courses, I went in expecting the same old “were going to get you contracts with the big developers/GC’s” stuff, but nothing ever happens. But from the beginning CanDice Miller and Mary Griffin cared about everything from making sure I got into the class, to making sure I understood what the class was about to making sure we all have the right connections to move forward to the next level. What I have learned was way more than expected as well the people I met.

Since completion of the class I have the spoken to three GC's personal, spoken to a veteran sub one on one, gotten questions answered from people who are skilled in the field but most of all I was able to get bonded. This wasn't just a class where we meet for 8 weeks, we actually learned something and will be able to use everything we learned for big projects. Overall, for me the class was amazing and gave me renewed faith that I can get on bigger projects and have the tools and knowledge to complete such projects with flying colors. Good program ran by good people, who really cares. I would recommend to any serious contractor who wants to learn, grow and level up.”

-Geoffrey Allen, PMG

UPLYFT Home Improvement

“I would like to "Thank" African American Chamber of Commerce NJ (AACCNJ), NJ Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), and Small Business Association (SBA) for partnering together to develop the Small Business Bonding Readiness Assistance Program, SBBRAP. I am grateful to my sponsor, Joanne Brooks and Reginald Jarvis for providing access to this opportunity. A shout out to Joanne for creating a rich curriculum for all participants regardless of their trade industry and level.

Thank you to all the participants behind the scenes that came together to provide resources to support the mission of this program. I would like to show gratitude to the staff at AACCNJ particularly Mrs. Mary Griffin and Mrs. CanDice Miller for always being available and ready to answer questions. SBBRAP, is a much-needed program for small businesses in the area of construction. I wish I could repeat the class. There's still so much to learn.

The program was packed with knowledge that is useful to scale my business. I now have access to leading industry professionals covering each scope of the commercial construction business. This is a true value add for a beginner in the commercial arena. I gained a tremendous amount of resources and colleague connections that will benefit my future growth. I was honored to meet John Harmon, President of AACCNJ. I appreciate all he has done to make this program a reality. Overall, it was a great opportunity! I feel blessed to have been one of the chosen to go through it. Thank you!”

-Juanita Dryer, Uplyft Home Improvement, LLC