

## DBE Success Story: Kendra Dinkins, Taylor Electric Company

### Accelerating Growth with the DBE Certification: Taylor Electric Company, Chicago, Ill.

For nearly 100 years, Taylor Electric Company has been serving the Chicago area. The family-owned and -operated company specializes in road construction, traffic signal and lighting maintenance and vertical structure, along with multi-unit, residential, and commercial electrical maintenance.

Taylor Electric was founded in 1922 by Sam Taylor with his son Rufus Taylor joining the company in 1958 and later assuming the role of president. Today, the company is led by third and fourth generation descendants overseeing a team of more than 80 employees. As a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certified by the Illinois Department of Transportation, the company has built a reputation for excellence working with state agencies and local clients such as Guaranteed Rate Field, home of the Chicago White Sox; and Soldier Field, home of the Chicago Bears.

*"We've gone from a few hundred thousand dollars a year in revenue to averaging about \$15 million a year. Every aspect of IDOT's DBE program is designed to bring diverse businesses to the table and position them to shine."*

### Partnering with IDOT to Propel Growth

Taylor Electric's partnership with IDOT dates back to the program's early days, yet CEO Kendra Dinkins continues to find value in available tools and resources to scale.



*"We had been operational for about 60 years before IDOT's DBE certification program began, but roadwork and larger projects required a larger amount of capital and a heavier investment in our staff and equipment," said Dinkins. "Conducting business with IDOT gave us the exposure we needed to create relationships with banks and access more entities willing to invest in a DBE company."*

Photo: CEO Kendra Dinkins with Secretary Omer Osman and OBWD Director Pam Simon

From IDOT's workshops and events to IL UCP participation, Taylor Electric has maximized every avenue to bid on larger projects. Today, the company conducts lighting maintenance for all IDOT roads in Cook County.

*"The big boys usually win these highly sought-after maintenance contracts, so for a DBE to be part of that is monumental," said Dinkins. "We're grateful to IDOT for helping us position ourselves to secure such steady income. Particularly during the 2008 recession, if not for that maintenance contract, we might not have survived."*

According to Dinkins, the company has also grown as a result of partnerships established within IDOT's DBE program.

"At one point, our uncle had developed a great relationship with Contractors' Light and Maintenance. They brought us into their office, opened their books, and showed us how they look at jobs. Breaking into roadwork is difficult, and they took us under their wing," remembers Dinkins. "We've been able to deliver similar value as a DBE. Smaller, more diverse contractors often run leaner, meaner offices. Working with us, the big boys are inspired to discover some efficiencies of their own."

### What's Next for Taylor Electric Company?

Taylor Electric's revenue has continued to rise as the cost of doing business increases. Looking ahead, the company plans to pursue more private contracts and create ties with larger corporations.

*"As our record growth positions us to transition out of the DBE program, we're confident that IDOT's given us the tools to branch out profitably," said Dinkins.*

