Expanding Support for Business Resiliency and Community Prosperity

CU Grow: Vendor Development Progra









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# Welcome

# From Columbia University Facilities and Operations

Across Columbia University, there is an expansive and comprehensive collection of programs and initiatives focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This is especially true at Columbia University Facilities and Operations (CUFO), where we are committed to diversity and supporting our local neighbors. Since its launch in 2017, this mindset has been at the heart of our *CU Grow: Vendor Development Program* — a program invested in the growth of minority-, women-, and locally-owned (MWL) businesses.

In its first five years, CU Grow helped to open new doors for 84 locally owned and diverse firms, expanded the University's MWL vendor pool with skilled, creative, and motivated vendors that will help elevate the quality of goods and services at the University, and awarded over \$90M in contracts to program graduates for work across all of Columbia University's campuses.

In the pages ahead, you will learn about the intention for the program's creation, the results-driven design model, its impact, and plans for the future. CU Grow would not be what it is without our excellent leadership team — a cadre of professionals from CUFO and Columbia's School of Professional Studies — along with the expert coaches who keep our mission front and center and campus partners including CUFO Procurement, Columbia Law School and Columbia Print, who have helped expand program offerings to further its impact and results.

While many thanks go to our staff and partners, the ultimate success of the CU Grow program comes from the program's participants — the business owners and executives who committed themselves to improving their business through the CU Grow program while simultaneously managing their day-to-day work. As the CU Grow program opens new doors for the participating MWL businesses at Columbia and beyond, it equally creates new opportunities for the institutions who benefit from the creativity, energy, and diverse perspectives that come from working with these firms.

We hope that you enjoy reading the report and would like to congratulate all the program alumni. It's been great to see you grow!



**David Greenberg**Executive Vice President
University Facilities and Operations



Tanya E. Pope
Assistant Vice President
University Supplier Diversity

# **Executive Summary**



In 2008, Columbia University Facilities and Operations (CUFO) identified a need for minority-, women-, and locally-owned (MWL) businesses to have greater understanding of Columbia's procurement process and their own internal business operations to achieve greater success. The university made a fundamental and impactful investment in these underutilized vendors with its Columbia University Minority, Women and Local Construction Trade Certificate Mentorship Program. This program was redesigned to become the CU Grow: Vendor Development Program (CU Grow), which focuses on firms within the built environment and is an exemplar of tangible, meaningful institutional commitment to community advancement. Its oneof-a-kind, synergic investment in its MWL vendors makes CU Grow the only known program with this program design within a college or university system that helps these vendors scale to be eligible to win more construction-related contracts.

With a curriculum designed by the Columbia University School of Professional Studies (SPS) Construction Administration master's program, CU Grow has become a cornerstone of the university's commitment to prioritizing supplier diversity and vendor development. Its primary objectives are twofold: 1) to help MWL businesses win more contracts with the university and other larger institutions, 2) and to grow MWL subcontractors into primes.

This report surveys the first five years of CU Grow's progress, from 2017-2021. Since its formal launch in 2017, CU Grow has helped to facilitate a 22% increase in MWL vendors contracted by CUFO. During this period, 18.5% of all CUFO-contracted vendors were MWL, and those vendors won 33.1% of the awarded contract spend. Likewise, CU Grow participants accounted for 4.9% of all vendors (26.7% of MWL vendors) and were awarded 6.6% of total contract spend (20.0% of spend on all MWL vendors). As this report explains, what these data demonstrate is that CUFO backed its commitments to supplier diversity with dollars, a sign of its financial investment in these vital underrepresented and local businesses. The impact of CUFO's contract awards to CU Grow firms generated an estimated \$9.5 million in local NYC tax revenue<sup>1</sup>, and its impact on employment was the creation of over 3,000 jobs<sup>2</sup>.

This report also looks at CU Grow's impact on historically underutilized vendors according to MWL demographics and across trades. The data reveal that of the 86 firms that completed the CU Grow program, 59 firms (69%) were minority-owned, 40 (47%) were women-owned, and 19 (22%) were locally-owned. Some firms fit within more than one of these categories, as the sum of these demographic numbers indicates.

The greatest amount of contract spend awarded to CU Grow participants from 2017-2021 was won by businesses in the following trades (percent of awarded spend won by CU Grow participants is included in parentheses after each trade): General Contractors (68.5%), Plumbing (27.3%), Electrical (6.3%), Specialty Construction/Services (1.5%), and Environmental Testing (1.4%).

Collectively, the data shared and contextualized in this report demonstrate CUFO's unique, impactful programmatic and contractual contributions to Columbia University's supplier-diversity initiatives. Fulfillment of these initiatives is critical to Columbia's commitment to the community in which it was established and continues to embrace—those local areas that are home to historically underutilized vet vital firms and their residents. While U.S. Census Bureau data show that minorities and women earn substantially less from their labor as entrepreneurs than their non-minority male counterparts, procurement is a powerful tool to promote equal economic opportunities and to counteract discrimination in the marketplace. CUFO's CU Grow program serves as an exemplary model for both Columbia University's internal diversity initiatives and other universities across New York and beyond, as it successfully links more MWL vendors to increased opportunities for enhancing their business operations and securing more contracts.

"Although my company was established 20 years before I began the program, the curriculum and my coach taught me how to spot issues immediately and course correct. The ability to highlight our strengths and weaknesses allowed me to move my company in a direction I would have been too intimidated to pursue beforehand. The team at Columbia is supportive, encouraging, and inspirational. I could not be prouder to be a part of the team and to give back to companies just coming into the Columbia family."



Annemarie diSalvo President diSalvo Interiors

- 1. Average of NYC Small Business Tax (2022) = 7.68% (of \$124 million): https://www.nyc.gov/site/finance/taxes/business-corporation-tax.page
- 2. Job creation is calculated in New York State in the construction industry using a New York State Department of Transportation formula: For every \$1 Million of construction value, 24.1 jobs are created. This formula was applied to the revenue generated by the increase in revenue from 2017 to 2021.



9696

satisfaction rate with the program

# **Chapter 1: The Origins**



Cohort 4 Matching Ceremony (2020)

For many years, public sector agencies at federal, state and local levels have been required by legislation to award contracts to minority- and women-owned firms. While legislated requirements have not extended to private institutions, many colleges and universities have adopted similar mandates and committed to advancing a comprehensive equity agenda. Since 2008, Columbia University in the City of New York (CU) has made increasing diversity and contracting local businesses top priorities along with increasing student and faculty diversity and closing the academic opportunity gap.

Although investments in supplier diversity aren't directly visible to residents, CU's campus expansion, including the Manhattanville project, has fed and continues to feed back into its local community in vital and progressive ways beyond its intellectual and creative contributions. Projects like the

Manhattanville campus expansion, in turn, provide vital opportunities for CU and the community to grow together. This five-year report highlights just one of CU's significant efforts to pour resources back into its local community, particularly through its investments in BIPOC business owners, women entrepreneurs and locally owned businesses.

### **CUFO Leads the Way**

Recognizing CU's impact as an anchor institution and large employer in Upper Manhattan, Columbia University's Facilities and Operations (CUFO) has led the way as an early adopter of supplier diversity goals, committing to a goal of awarding at least 35 percent of construction and maintenance spend to certified minority- and women-owned businesses or locally-owned businesses (those residing in one of 17 specific zip codes across Harlem, Upper Manhattan and

Southern Bronx neighborhoods). Collectively, these businesses are referred to as minority-, women-, and locally-owned (MWL) businesses. CU also has a procurement goal that at least 40 percent of hours worked on construction and maintenance for CU projects with a value of over \$1M will be performed by minority, women, and/or local workers. Notably, the university has a dedicated, five-person supplier diversity office within CUFO that manages diversity efforts across the institution and reports directly to the executive vice president.

### CU Grow Is Born

Increasing diversity at Columbia University has come by way of myriad policies, practices, and procedures, including creating and hiring new diversity-related leadership positions within CUFO and establishing policies that facilitate clear goals, metrics, and accountability. One of the most successful outcomes of senior leadership and policy is the investment in CUFO's flagship supplier-diversity program, *CU Grow: Vendor Development Program.* Developed to help MWL firms expand their existing portfolio of contracts and clients, this no-fee annual capacity-building program is at the core of CUFO's multi-dimensional approach to diversity.

CU Grow addresses two critical functions. It identifies work for MWL firms to bid on and provides them with opportunities, thereby expanding the university's MWL vendor pool with skilled, creative, and motivated vendors to elevate the quality of purchasing at the university. (Historically, one of the challenges that procurement officers at colleges and universities have cited is difficulty identifying diverse suppliers who met procurement criteria and/or provided goods and services in the areas needed.) It also invests in helping those firms to improve and expand their businesses, with the purpose of making them attractive vendors to other large anchor institutions and corporations. Led by a seasoned program manager and dedicated expert coaches — established professionals within CU



### Map of CU Grow Zip Codes for Locally-Owned Businesses in Upper Manhattan and the Bronx

The locally-owned business criteria for the CU Grow program refer to those participants whose primary business is located within one of the following 17 zip codes in Upper Manhattan or the Bronx: 10025, 10026, 10027, 10029, 10030, 10031, 10032, 10033, 10034, 10035, 10037, 10039, 10040, 10451, 10454, 10455, 10474.

or at partner institutions with knowledge in business development, procurement, project management, finance, marketing, and other business expertise — CU Grow is designed to support executive decision-making and strategic thinking and to assist firms with business management and growth.

## What Sets CU Grow Apart

CU Grow developed out of the Columbia University
Minority, Women and Local Construction Trade
Certificate Mentorship Program, which ran from
January 2008 to December 2014. University leaders
had recognized that many MWL firms were not
prepared to meet the unique demands of completing

construction projects at large institutions like Columbia, so they developed this program in partnership with the New York City Department of Small Business Services to help local firms gain the knowledge and skills they lacked to win large contracts.

Eighty-six small and mid-sized construction trade firms were accepted into the program over its four cohorts, with 78 firms having graduated from the program. Those 78 firms collectively received \$33M in construction and maintenance contract spend with the university as of December 2014. The program garnered city, state and national recognition and laid the foundation for the *CU Grow: Vendor Development Program*, which began in 2017.

## At the Center of CU Grow, a Powerhouse Administrative Team

If you ask CU Grow participants what they appreciate about the program, they will all say the dedication of the program's staff. The CU Grow administrative team is completely focused on the health of each business and gives each business owner individualized, customized attention as they navigate the program as well as future opportunities as alumni. Compassion and respect for participants' business needs and well-being are guiding principles for the relationship that team members develop with each CU Grow participant. In addition, the countless hours they devote to conference calls with participants and connecting participants to resources beyond the curriculum demonstrate their passion for what they do.



Scharlene de la Cruz Manager of University Supplier Diversity / CU Grow Program



Cohort 3 Matching Ceremony (2019)

CU Grow has expanded the mission and reach of the Columbia University Minority, Women and Local Construction Trade Certificate Mentorship Program with the following key differences:

- relied on subject-centered curriculum design with participants attending classes, CU Grow offers a coach-based, problem-centered curriculum design that promotes reflective work and encourages vendors to strengthen areas of their businesses that need improvement to be competitive.
- Funding: Previously reliant on city funding, CU
  Grow is now a purely mission-driven program
  funded solely by CUFO.
- Participating Vendors: In the program's first iteration, CU Grow accepted only current approved vendors into the program. By Cohort 2, CUFO realized they had to look outside their current vendor database, because the university needed other products and services that weren't

being provided by existing MWL vendors in their pool and because many firms wanted to participate in CU Grow to create a relationship with Columbia but weren't current vendors. This shift made the program more challenging because they had to not only train the firms to enhance their businesses but also onboard them as new approved vendors (which can be a lengthy process), as well as introduce firms to a network within the university that would hire them to perform work. Now, CU Grow has galvanized both internal and external partners as well as key community stakeholders, all of whom are committed to a vision that extends beyond the university and includes the surrounding community.

This shift in approach set the tone for the last five years of the program, during which CUFO has successfully met and continues to expand its programmatic goals for increasing diversity and supporting vendor participants.

# All Renovation Construction, LLC 2018 Cohort



As a direct result of participating in CU Grow, All Renovation Construction, LLC has become a general contractor working as a prime contractor instead of a subcontractor. However, before participating in CU Grow, All Renovation Construction was known as a top subcontractor of residential renovations of brownstones and interior carpentry work for affordable housing projects that were performed by larger prime general contractors. Having previously initiated networking conversations with Columbia University but not getting any response, they learned about CU Grow through the Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC) and signed up to learn more about doing business with the university and becoming an approved Columbia University vendor.

What Allan Suarez, Principal and Chief Operating Officer, found most valuable about CU Grow is how it raised awareness of all that they needed to do to take care of the business. "As an entrepreneur, we tend to want to do everything," he explained. "The CU Grow program gets you thinking more about your company in regards to everything from finances, to marketing, to team engagement — all stuff that you really never get a chance to sit back and think about because you're so engaged in trying to do everything. It also taught us to think outside the box and see what opportunities are out there that we've maybe missed, or assumed we weren't qualified for, etc. That one thing stuck with me a lot."

Early in 2023, All Renovation Construction met its goal of becoming a prime general contractor, for a state agency. This achievement, said Allan, "came directly about because of the SWOT analysis portion of the CU Grow program."

Now a coach for other CU Grow firms, Allan said that the program "helps stimulate your mind to say, 'How can I grow my business?' And that's a great moniker for what we're doing, because it makes you really *think about* your business, when before you were just *doing* your business. All that stuff that bigger corporations have a specific team that does it, we have to do on our own. So these programs do take time, but they end up stimulating your brain and helping your company grow. The value's there. You just have to invest the time and some effort into it."

In addition to projects outside Columbia University, since 2018, All Renovation Construction has completed seven full gut renovations of university facilities and one commercial renovation of a property that the university owns on Broadway. They continue to do smaller university real estate commercial department projects as task order jobs.



All Renovation Construction performed a fit-out of a Columbia retail space on Broadway.

nstruction

CU Grow participants ranked business coaching

4.6

out of five

# **Chapter 2: The Strategy**



Participants, CU Grow Procurement Event at the Forum

The time, money and resources it takes for businesses to perform their complex work, manage teams onsite and their internal staff in the office can be immense. Add strategic planning and a commitment to participate in executive coaching, and the balance required to manage it all is something most MWL business owners struggle to maintain. For this reason, the 11-month CU Grow: Vendor Development Program, which runs every February through December, focuses on helping MWL businesses leverage their competitive advantage, differentiate themselves in the procurement process, strengthen their business knowledge, and build their professional networks. While existing CU vendors are encouraged to participate in the program, its makeup today consists primarily of vendors new to the university who sell products and services that the university needs.

The program, which is designed with flexibility for participants to customize to their specific needs, is

a fast-track transformative learning experience with the curricular excellence that you'd expect from an Ivy League institution. With a curriculum designed by the Columbia University School of Professional Studies (SPS) Construction Administration master's program, CU Grow's objectives aim to:

- Help participants plan the next three years of their business growth.
- Prepare participants to perform as Columbia University's (CU's) prime or subcontractors.
- Introduce participants to myriad procurement opportunities and resources to help them win contracts.

Rather than providing an approach to coaching firms in general strategic planning that looks at every aspects of a participant's business, CU Grow requires participants to select and focus on the most critical areas of their business that need improvement

— areas that, if strategically developed and implemented, would help improve the overall stability and productivity of the business. The program is keen on examining specific problem areas that have hindered operations and on developing effective business strategies to remedy those problems. Some of the primary problem areas participants concentrate on include staff acquisition and retention, marketing and advertising, financial recordkeeping and reporting, client engagement, submission of construction documents and paperwork and responding to requests for proposals (RFPs).

The CU Grow curriculum includes a coaching engagement template, training, and support throughout the program. Through CU Grow, vendors have access to personalized coaching sessions designed for each business stage, one-on-one executive strategy meetings and a session on executive presence, one-on-one social media and website strategy meetings, advising sessions on upcoming contract opportunities with Columbia University departments and partners, Construction Administration webinars, and a customized three-year growth plan.

# **Program Eligibility**

The CU Grow program accepts firms in the built environment, including construction trades, professional services, suppliers, and commodities. To be eligible, a firm must:

- Demonstrate a portfolio of work within the "built environment" and provide references.
- Have had its business operations established for over three years.
- Have a commodity or service that aligns with Columbia University's needs.

- Be Minority-, Women-, and/or Locally Owned, as defined by certifying agencies such as The NYC Small Business Services' minority and/or womenowned business enterprise (M/WBE) and/or locallyowned firm based on geographic location in a 17 zip code area.
- Have a revenue between \$250K and \$5M.

Over the last five years, the program has refined its selection process to ensure not only that participants can meet the requirements and successfully graduate but also that these firms have the greatest opportunity to be matched upon graduation with Columbia University projects, agencies, and partners that need their services and commodities.

"I felt the program was designed to touch on all areas that would assist a new company to grow. In each session there were nuggets of information that helped accelerate my company's growth...This program helped me create a vision and I am happy and grateful for all the business I have been able to sustain with the tools I learned from the program."



Annmarie Bhola
CEO of Enhanced Building
Solutions

### **CU Grow Cohort Deliverables**

The results of objective-focused work completed over the course of the program's 11 months are:



### A Business Assessment

The program starts with an assessment of the firm by the coach, after which participants complete preparatory, self-guided work to inform discussions and development of a strategic growth plan.



### 3-Year Strategic Growth Plan

Participants create business strategies and address problems discovered through the coach's initial assessment and participants' preparatory work.



# Action Plans

Coaches and firm owners work together to develop specific action plans with a checklist of tasks the firm needs to complete to develop the 3-year strategic growth plan.



# Financial Projections

Vendors develop a financial model with projections of what their business will look like if they apply these strategies and specific action plans.

### The Curriculum

### **Strategically Selecting Coaches**

Identifying the best coaches for the participants starts at the application stage. Based on each vendor's business, unique challenges and learning style, CU Grow matches vendors with coaches that best align with their needs.

From there, participants and coaches engage in seven personalized coaching sessions, one designed for each business stage. Each month, participants meet with their coach, who delivers actionable advice and instruction to help participants scale their business by reaching specific goals.

# Consultations with Construction Industry Expert-in-Residence

Many firms that apply to the CU Grow program are in a specific trade, and most know how to perform the work in their trade. The construction industry expert-in-residence works with participants to gain a greater understanding of how their business exists in and can support the overall built environment. This includes how to bid on and estimate work and how to accurately process invoices and submittals for timely payment.

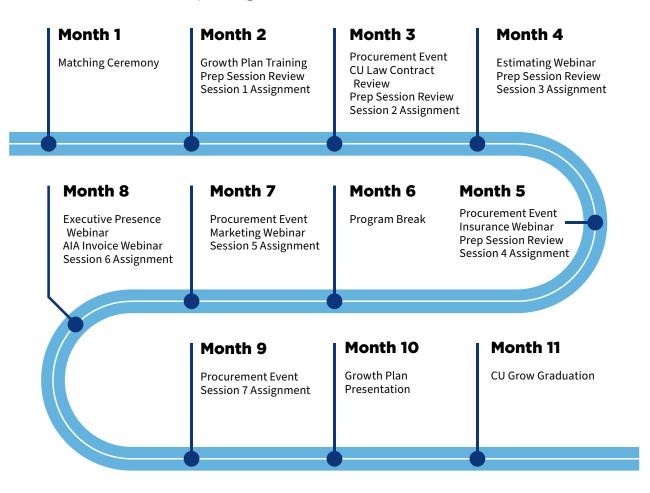
Participants are required to take part in dedicated, one-on-one sessions with the assigned construction

industry expert-in-residence. The expert partners with each participant to review various aspects of their company to ensure the firm can successfully manage logistics and implement tasks required to meet construction industry standards. Together, they create a plan for strengthening the business to meet these standards and trends.

# **Consultations with Marketing Expert-in- Residence**

For MWLs to leverage their certification status, it is important that they increase their outreach and marketing efforts to large firms who should know they exist. The goal of the marketing component of CU Grow's curriculum is to ensure its participants understand how to position their business effectively as a qualified, capable firm in their service area to attract prospective clients who are looking to hire good firms that may happen to be MWLs. Each CU Grow participant is required to meet one-on-one with the marketing expert-in-residence, who conducts an audit of the participant's marketing assets, assists each firm with developing marketing and sales strategies, and provides search engine optimization (SEO) guidance for the firm's website. Participants are also taught how to use digital channels like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Google to generate demand for their business. Lastly, the marketing expert-in-residence guides the

## **CU Grow Cohort Monthly Program Schedule**





Edwin Torres, with Theodore Schultz, President of IAG Electric

firm in creating a clear communications strategy that builds trust and establishes authority before the owner even speaks with a prospective buyer.

#### **Procurement Events**

In every cohort, the CU Grow program hosts four procurement events where participants and alumni are introduced to Columbia University project managers from all campuses and to other construction-related firms that potentially offer them opportunities or resources. The events work toward achieving two goals: 1) ensuring that CU Grow participants have equal opportunity to compete for and do business with Columbia University, and 2) introducing Columbia's departments and partners to these qualified MWLs, encouraging their use whenever possible to reach the overarching goal of vendor diversity. At each event, business owners receive information about upcoming projects from CU departments and other affiliates, as well as business development resources from partnering

organizations. From 2017-2021, each procurement event hosted an average of 35 CU Grow attendees. Because Columbia University is a private institution and its procurements are not publicly available and shared only with approved vendors, this is an exclusive opportunity for the firms in the cohort.

### Support + Resources

The construction industry is a behemoth — and it's true that CU Grow participants are competing with a lot of other construction-related vendors within and outside of Columbia University's vendor network. For this reason, the CU Grow program attempts to give its participants a competitive edge by keeping them abreast of the latest resources, project opportunities, trends, and news related to Columbia University and its partners. The program's dedicated staff work diligently to stay in communication with participants about their progress with coaching and any needs/ challenges they may have while completing the program. CUFO also engages current participants

and alumni with monthly newsletters and an upto-date website. In addition, CUFO partners with others at the university and in the public and non-profit sectors — including Columbia/Harlem Small Business Development Center, NYC Department of Small Business Services, Columbia Law School's Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic, Columbia Print, and BOC Network — that support NYC small businesses by offering wraparound services like back office support, financial assistance, additional business training solutions, networking forums and mentorship opportunities.

In addition to CU Grow, CUFO also participates as a market access partner in Ascend NYC, offering contracting opportunities to businesses of color at Columbia University. Tanya Pope at CUFO leads Ascend NYC's private anchor council, in which private sector firms, including the Wildlife Conservation Society and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, all work together to advance supplier diversity. The goal of Columbia University's partnership with Ascend NYC is to provide businesses of color with contract opportunities by connecting them with Ascend NYC's private anchor council members looking to diversify their supply chains. Powered and funded by JPMorgan Chase, CUFO in partnership with BOC Network is committed to supporting Ascend NYC.

## **Graduation + Alumni Support**

At the end of each 11-month CU Grow program, firms present their growth plans to a panel of business development experts and participate in a graduation ceremony. However, the relationship between alumni firms and CUFO does not end there. Each year, CU Grow staff work diligently to hold fast to the strong vendor-institution relationship cultivated through the CU Grow program lifecycle to assure CU Grow alumni continue to receive contract opportunities.

CUFO continues to invest in CU Grow alumni in four specific ways:

- When award opportunities that match the trades of alumni arise, the procurement department invites alumni to bid on construction and/or maintenance projects as prime contractors.
- 2. CUFO publishes a monthly newsletter that shares resources and external opportunities with alumni.
- 3. Twice a year, CUFO updates a list of subcontractors, composed mostly of CU Grow firms from over 17 trades, which accompanies every RFP sent to prime contract bidders on Columbia University projects.
- 4. At the end of each calendar year, alumni are sent an assessment that tracks their revenue and large-scale contracts awarded outside of Columbia University. CUFO is in regular, direct contact with the many firms that continue to be active vendors of Columbia University to discuss construction-related projects these firms are working on.

"CUFO has continually supported the development of our womanowned construction company and provided access to opportunities that have enabled our growth. We greatly appreciate the University and are proud to call them a most valued client."



Voula Mamais President and CEO Mamais Construction



Cohort 6 Graduation (2022), including expert coaches and participants

### **Data-Driven Program Evaluation**

Data collection is the objective pillar that drives the success of the CU Grow program. Its integration into every step of the program — from application through graduation and beyond — helps CUFO meet the program's objectives and contributes to higher-level revenue for CU Grow participants. Being able to

measure impact is a cornerstone of the program. Also, tracking data determines ways to iterate and improve the program year after year.

Each year, CUFO assesses the inflow of its MWL economic activity brought on by CU Grow programmatic work. To do so, CUFO collects and works with large data sets that allow them to measure

## **CU Grow Program Partners**

The Columbia-Harlem Small Business Development Center (SBDC) helps entrepreneurs build and grow their companies providing access to capital, support on M/WBE certification and offering capacity building programs through its Columbia Community Business Program (CCBP) and the Harlem Local Vendor Program (HLVP).

The NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) helps unlock economic potential and create economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting New Yorkers to good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and building thriving neighborhoods across the five boroughs. Specifically, they offer firms pro-bono legal services and an understanding of how to sell to the NYC government.

The Business Outreach Center (BOC) Network's mission is to improve the economic prospects of traditionally underserved groups, with a focus on low- and moderate-income entrepreneurs and their communities, and thereby creating genuinely brighter futures.

**Columbia Law School** offers construction contract webinars and pop-up contract clinics to assure the firms are aware of some of the pitfalls that can exist in construction contracts.

**Columbia Print** provides design services in both digital and print to the firms in the program to assure their program collateral is high quality and comprehensive.

CU Grow's impact on the number of bids offered, number of projects awarded, increases in income, and value added to local areas. CUFO's analysis of the CU Grow program focuses on four measurements of impact:

- Direct Spend: CUFO tracks the increase in awards and spend (actual dollars paid by Columbia University) to CU Grow participants and alumni, starting with revenue spent two years before program enrollment, if there is any, during the year of the program and then two years after the program's end as a registered vendor with CU.
- Indirect Spend: CUFO tracks the awards and spending by non-MWL general contractors to subcontracted MWL vendors, including CU Grow participants and alumni.
- **Economic Impact:** CUFO tracks the economic impact of CU Grow in two ways:
  - Jobs created: CUFO estimates the number of jobs created by each firm based on the New York State Department of Transportation formula that for every \$1M of construction value, 24.1 jobs are created. This calculation is made periodically based on the total spend amount from the beginning of a contract award through the life of that yendor's contracted work for CUFO.
  - Local impact: CUFO measures the local economic impact based on the net income of each business and the local business tax rates applied. CUFO started tracking this impact annually since it was delivering the Construction Trades program.
- Added Value: CUFO surveys CU Grow participants with pre- and post-program assessments as well as alumni on an annual basis. From these assessments, CUFO can extrapolate trends in participants' viewpoints and experiences.

Through the program, CU Grow participants win not only opportunities to work on more or larger projects

for Columbia University, but also — when they apply the lessons learned from the program — are awarded contracts with other large companies/institutions or access to resources that were previously inaccessible to them. If participants or alumni win outside contracts, CUFO tracks for each vendor:

- Number of outside contracts and revenue earned from those contracts
- Which large clients the vendor has contracted with
- How the vendor utilizes support and resources that are ushered in through partners (e.g., loans they've obtained through CUFO lending partners like the BOC Capital Contract Loans or LISC Capital Growth Fund)

As a one-of-a-kind program with a strategic focus on vendors in the built environment, CU Grow offers tremendous benefit to MWL firms and to the communities in which they reside, as construction trades offer great potential for scalability and economic impact. Not only does the program advance vendor diversity within Columbia University's system, it also amplifies the power and competitive advantage of those businesses in their local communities by directly investing in their success. The positive financial impact then is deployed back in the neighborhoods and communities where these firms exist. The program's well-defined, focused, and goal-oriented curriculum is flexible enough to meet the unique needs of each participating firm due to its self-guided nature. Because each firm is strategically selected, participants are well poised to achieve their and CU Grow's collective vision. And the support given to participants is driven by care, through the active involvement and outreach of CU Grow's dedicated staff, coaches, partners, and community stakeholders. CU Grow's careful data collection and analysis allow for good reporting, helping program leaders plan for systematic growth and program refinement. The result is a win-win for all stakeholders.

# Greg Switzer Gregory Switzer Architecture, PC 2018 Cohort



For many years, Greg Switzer sat at his desk, comfortable with what he had built—a reputable boutique architecture firm working in residential interior renovations. His firm, a purposefully small business, boasts a range of clients, from Lady Gaga's parents' restaurant on New York's Upper East Side to the residences of A-list celebrities across the country. Still, Greg aspired to improve his business but hadn't had the time to "step back and allow someone else to look under the hood." Before CU Grow, Greg organically grew the business without projections and had no true understanding of market positioning. All his projects came through word of mouth. He wanted to sit down with someone and review his business to find out how he could do things more efficiently or better. CU Grow gave him that opportunity.

"My coach was really interested in learning about business beyond the glossy photos I'd use in ads," Greg said. "They looked at my financial bottom line and how we were getting work. They took all the data from my company and shared how I could scale." Getting a third-party point of view made Greg realize where he'd been underestimating the potential of his company and the resources he had to scale.

After developing benchmarks against his competitors with the help of his coach and following his coach's advice, he started to see direct benefits. Prior to his participation in CU Grow, Greg's contracts were largely for one-off projects, in addition to four residential \$15K rehabilitation projects with Columbia University. Within a year of starting CU Grow, he had roughly 60 projects generating upwards of \$1 million. He's also won contracts for Columbia's capital projects, including its greenhouse and common space in Faculty House, Pulitzer Hall, and Low Library. He also designed a Zen experience rooftop at Butler Hall. Almost every day, he gets a call or two to assist with another project at Columbia, which he credits to being a CU Grow alum.



Gregory Switzer Architecture's interior design of Butler Hall's Rootop lounge at Columbia University.

CU Grow participants' businesses showed over

90%

positive net increase in revenue for 2021

# **Chapter 3: The Impact**

# Part 1: Driving Success

CU Grow Empowers Participants to Win Contracts with Columbia University

The data gathered from 2017-2021 tell a complex story that is undoubtedly impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, participants consistently reported the positive impact of CU Grow on their businesses through this difficult time. The last few years have been some of the toughest for MWL firms, yet Columbia University's commitment to vendor diversity continued despite inordinate supply chain pressures. As the data in this chapter show, the CU Grow program's numbers (both contracts and financials) trended slightly downward; however, the impact and opportunities available to participants shouldn't be underestimated. Despite the pandemic's threat of pausing operations or completely dissolving supplier diversity programs across the nation, CUFO was able to buck the trend — not only by maintaining

Columbia's investment in the program but also by actively growing and expanding its services and support through it all.

The following sections present a comprehensive overview of contracts awarded to all participants relative to MWL vendors, which includes CU Grow participants, and of the trades most utilized in total and among MWL vendors and CU Grow participants. They also provide a clear sense of CUFO's spend on vendors relative to one another and highlight the trends driven by the pandemic. We expect that as industries worldwide regain capacity post-pandemic and emerge from a global recession, numbers will again trend upward, and the data significance of CU Grow's impact will be more obvious.

## CU Grow Participant Demographics (2017-2021)

**Minority-Owned Business Participants** 



69% of Total Participants

Asian: 11 Black: 27 Hispanic: 21

**Women-Owned Business Participants** 



47% of Total Participants Asian Women: 2 Black Women: 14 Hispanic Women: 6 White Women: 16

**Locally-Owned Business Participants** 



22% of Total Participants

# Trends with Vendors by MWL and CU Grow Participant Status

From 2017-2021, CUFO contracted with 790 total vendors. Of those, 146 (18.5%) were minority-, womenor locally-owned (MWL) vendors, 39 of whom were CU Grow participants (see Fig. 1). In other words, CU Grow participants accounted for 4.9% of all vendors and 26.7% of MWL vendors (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 3 shows the vendor categories where the greatest number of vendors were contracted by CUFO, with labels for the percentage of contracts awarded based on MWL and CU Grow Participant status and for the total dollar value of those contracts. (The categories shown are only those within which CU Grow participants or alumni were hired.)

The data collected also provide insights about contracted vendors (sorted by MWL status) and the trades they work within. Of the 790 total vendors that CUFO contracted with during the years 2017-2021, Fig. 4 reveals key vendor categories where CUFO has been successful in contracting with CU Grow vendors in particular: nowever, there are 44 other categories where CUFO continues its efforts to award more contracts. That is, while CU Grow participants have their greatest level of success (19.1%) in the General Contracting trade, the other four of the top five categories utilized by CUFO — Architect, Consultant (Other), Engineer, and HVAC/Mechanical — offer existing and prospective vendors great opportunity for and potential gain from CU Grow participation.

Figure 1

Percent of Contracted Vendors by MWL and CU

Grow Participant Status (2017–2021)

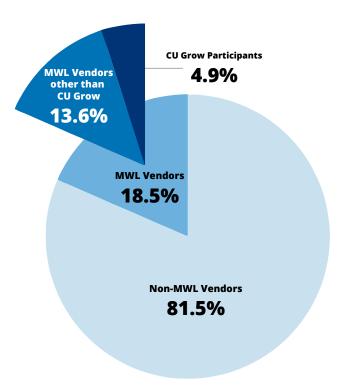


Figure 2

Percent of Contracted MWL Vendors That Were CU Grow Participants (2017-2021)

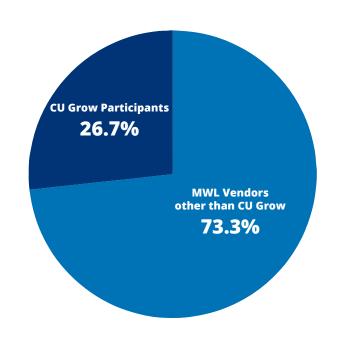


Figure 3

Number of Contracted Vendors by Vendor Category

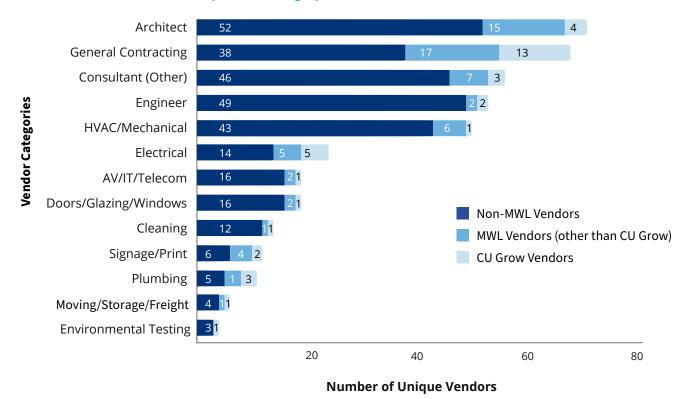
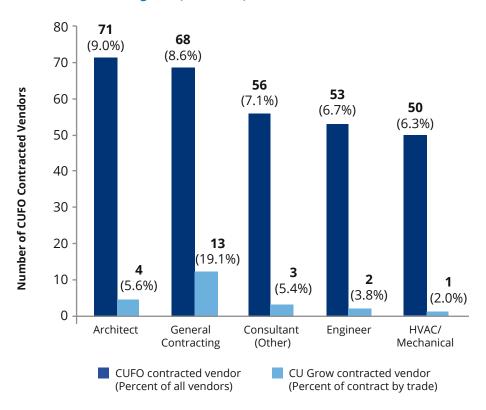


Figure 4

CUFO's Top Five Most Utilized Vendor Categories (2017–2021)



## Financial Impact and Outcomes

Of the total CUFO spend on vendors from 2017-2021, \$648.1M (33.1%) was spent with its total MWL vendor pool, \$129.7M (20.0% of total MWL spend) of which went to CU Grow participants, which represents 6.6% of total spend. (See Figs. 5 and 6 for a visual representation of the data.)

The three most frequent contract types that are typically awarded to CU Grow firms are Task Order, Term Consultant and Project contracts. The first, *Task Order* (TO) contracts, is awarded to trade vendors, and the second, *Term Consultant* (TC) contracts, is awarded to professional services firms. The third type of contract that can be used with MWL firms is a *Project Contract*, which is competitively bid.

In brief, a TO/TC contract can be awarded for multiple years and requires a vendor to have rates on file, and projects can be awarded in a non-competitive manner. For all intents and purposes, a TO is an expedited procurement method that CUFO can use to engage MWL vendors. The threshold for single-trade vendors on a TO contract is \$30K per project, and for general contractors or multi-trade vendors, it is \$70K per project. There is no limit on the number of projects a vendor can perform on TO/TC contracts at these threshold levels. In contrast, a *Project Contract* is competitively bid for each project that is awarded; while project contracts aren't exclusively higher in value, the great majority are. (See Table 1.)

Figure 5

Percent of Total Spend by MWL and CU Grow Participant Status (2017-2021)

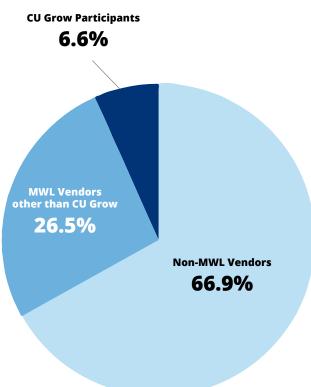


Figure 6

Percent of MWL Spend by CU Grow Participant Status (2017-2021)

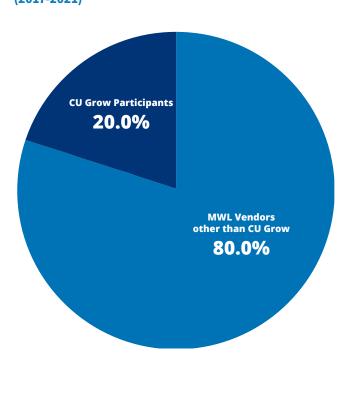


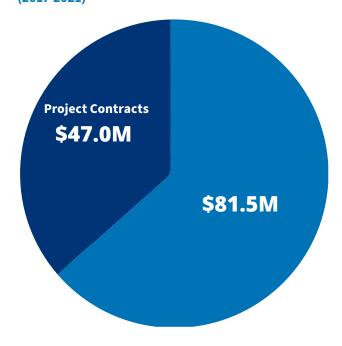
Table 1

Parameters for Each CUFO Contract Type

	Task Order	Term Consultant	Project Contract
Work Awarded	Submitted Proposal		Competitive Bid
Contract Duration	1 – 3 years		Duration of Project
Project Threshold	Single-Trade \$30K Multi-Trade/GC \$70K	\$100,000	Unlimited
Project Limit	As many projects as the firm is responsibly able to perform during the contract's duration		Limited to the Scope of Work

Figure 7

Types of Contract Spend on CU Grow Participants (2017-2021)



During the period of 2017-2021, TO/TC contracts awarded to CU Grow active participants and alumni spend equaled \$81.5M, which represented 30.1% of the University's total TO/TC spend. The value of spend on Project Contracts for CU Grow MWL firms was \$47.0M, representing 2.8% of all the university's contracts awarded (see Fig. 7.) Of the 33.1% of total spend on MWL vendors, 84.4% was spent on Project Contracts.

For most of the last ten years, CUFO has exceeded its goals of awarding at least 35 percent of construction and maintenance spend to MWL businesses. From 2017-2021, despite pandemic-related challenges, CUFO was within 2% of this goal, as Fig. 5 indicates. Its success can be attributed partly to the success of the CU Grow program; 20% of all construction and maintenance spend on MWL vendors went to CU Grow participants despite global economic factors beyond CUFO's control.

These findings are significant given the unprecedented circumstances — the COVID-19 pandemic — that impacted the program in the middle of this five-year period. For most of 2020 and 2021, and to some extent still today, businesses worldwide were stymied by supply chain blockages and workforce availability,

leading many businesses to close. Added to this reality is the fact that MWL firms were much more severely impacted by COVID-19 than non-minority firms. Finding that CU Grow participants won 20% of the spend awarded to MWL vendors is a testament to the program's effectiveness even during an inordinately challenging time.

The annual data from 2017-2021 require a bit more contextualizing. The number of unique vendors contracted each year is difficult to track due to contract lengths extending over multiple years; project deadlines moving; vendors' businesses changing due to retirement, closure, sale, etc.; terminated relationships with vendors; and so on. The spend is a bit easier to track but also is impacted by market variables. Spend across the two categories of MWL status (MWL other than CU Grow participants, and CU Grow participants) diverged a bit over the five years being reported on (see Table 2).

In 2018, spend on MWL vendors increased slightly. In 2019, spend increased substantially for other vendor types, but decreased slightly for CU Grow participants. In 2020, spend decreased across all vendor types, and in 2021, the only group to experience an increase in spend was the MWL vendors, but CU Grow participants within that category experienced decreased spend. Across all five years, spend on CU Grow participant vendors decreased. This can likely be attributed to the fact that for its first two years, the program admitted only existing vendors, who were already approved by the university and had established procurement relationships. As it became clear that more vendors were needed beyond those already in the university's vendor database, the procurement trajectory was slowed as a result of onboarding, networking and bringing firms into the CUFO environment.

# CU Grow Participant Vendor Categories with the Largest Award Values

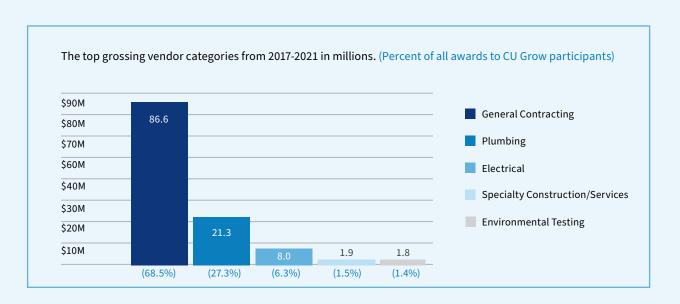


Table 2

Percent Change in Spend on MWL and CU Grow Participant Vendors Utilized from 2017-2021

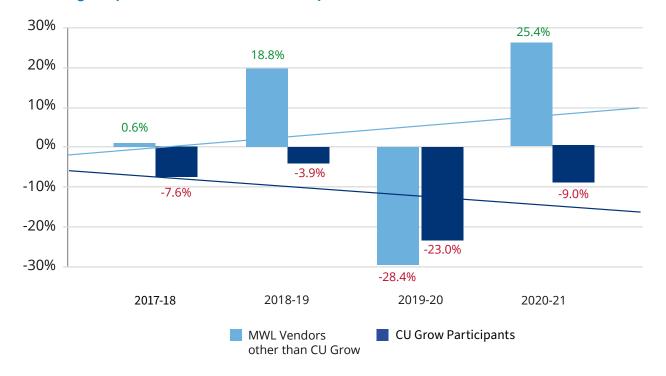
Year	Spend on MWL Vendors (other than CU Grow)	Change in Spend on MWL Vendors (other than CU Grow)	Spend on MWL Vendors (CU Grow)	Change in Spend on MWL Vendors (CU Grow)
2017	\$33,689,820		\$30,724,206	
2018	\$33,889,208	0.6%	\$28,396,900	-7.6%
2019	\$40,266,286	18.8%	\$27,279,641	-3.9%
2020	\$28,824,855	-28.4%	\$21,003,885	-23.0%
2021	\$36,146,966	25.4%	\$19,116,534	-9.0%

When depicted graphically, the data in Table 2 reveal the complexities that require further explanation. As Fig. 8 shows, trendlines for changes in spend on MWL vendors that were CU Grow participants were generally parallel and trended downward, while the trendline for spend on MWL vendors that were not CU Grow participants goes up over the five-year period.

There are many reasons for what, to people outside CUFO, may seem an unexpected outcome, where spend on CU Grow participants did not follow the same trajectory as spend on all other MWL vendors. Again, these decreases can be attributed to the period when firms new to the university were brought in versus those who had already been vendors.

Figure 8

Percent Change in Spend on MWL and CU Grow Participant Vendors Utilized from 2017-2021



### **Local Economic Impact**

The CU Grow program continues to have significant effects well beyond the 11-month program and the MWL vendors participating in it. CU's contract spend with CU Grow participants for 2017-2021 generated over an estimated \$9.5M in local NYC tax revenue and created over 3,000 jobs. The local taxes generated from CU Grow vendors have benefited the community at large, with improvements to neighborhood safety, education and health services. Employees of CU Grow vendors who won contracts, as well as their families, have reaped the economic benefits as well.

# Vendor Development

With a priority of procuring more MWL vendors as prime contractors, CU Grow has seen program participants leverage the program's unique

experiences to win more subcontractor experiences and, in turn, build their portfolios and capacity to become prime contractors. As of 2021, the trend was that fewer than 8% of CU Grow participants (7 out of 90 bid responses) were bidding on prime contracts. Only 42% of CU Grow participants who submitted bids (3 out of 7) were awarded those prime contracts.

However, to increase these awards to CU Grow participants, CUFO invested in helping participants gain experience by recommending them to general contractors as potential subcontractors. For every CU project awarded to a general contractor, CUFO shared a trades list — consisting of mostly CU Grow participants — so these general contractors could easily identify CU Grow participants as potential subcontractors. From 2017-2021, the general contractors reported a total spend of \$2.8M on MWL subcontractors, which included eight CU Grow participants, for non-Manhattanville projects.

## **Business Resilience of CU Grow Participants**

The table that follows lists, for each year from 2017-2021, the number of CUFO vendor firms who completed the CU Grow program alongside the numbers of those firms that are and are not still in business today. Only four firms (5% of CU Grow alumni firms) went out of business during this five-year period. The fact that 95% of firms remained in business, we believe, can be directly attributed to the knowledge and relationships they obtained through the CU Grow program.

Year	Number of Firms in Cohort that Completed the Program	Number of Firms in Cohort that Remain in Business	Number of Firms in Cohort that Are No Longer in Business
2017	24	22	2
2018	11	10	1
2019	15	14	1
2020	19	19	0
2021	17	17	0
TOTAL	86	82	4

# Part 2: Expanding Horizons

### CU Grow Empowers Participants to Win Clients Beyond Columbia University



West Side Stone & Marble (Cohort 1) polishing the lobby of Columbia University's Butler Hall

The CU Grow program has risen to prominence by placing a significant emphasis on expanding participants' relationships with institutions beyond Columbia University. This program prepares its participants to boldly expand their client base while adding resiliency and reducing risk. The intensive curriculum and unparalleled networking opportunities provided by CU Grow have proven instrumental in achieving this aim. Since its inception, the CU Grow program has driven immense value by encouraging participants to evaluate new avenues and incorporate innovative ideas and fresh perspectives into their business strategies. As a result, CU Grow participants not only have thrived by

winning more contracts with Columbia University, but also have witnessed its alumni rapidly expanding their business with anchor institutions, large corporations, and government suppliers in just a short period of time. This remarkable success underscores the pivotal role of CU Grow in shaping the future of entrepreneurship and innovation.

The following case studies offer a striking glimpse into how CU Grow alumni are propelling their businesses to unprecedented heights by expanding beyond the program's purview. These real-world examples provide a practical and insightful understanding of how CU Grow is empowering its participants to break new ground and achieve remarkable success.



# **Diversifying Business to Increase Revenue and Expand Client Base**

Deborah Romain with Deb Romain Consulting, LLC

2018 Cohort

The case of Deb Romain Consulting, LLC highlights the impact of CU Grow's emphasis on diversifying participants' businesses to increase revenue and expand their client base. Networking and developing sales and marketing skills can significantly contribute to this effort. CU Grow provided the opportunity for Deborah to acquire new skills, enhance existing ones, and expand the company's network.

### **Challenge:**

Prior to participating in CU Grow, Deb Romain Consulting, LLC focused primarily on building its signage and visual communications business within the healthcare field. However, the company was limited by its industry focus and was not exploring opportunities beyond its current clientele.

#### **Solutions:**

After attending a recruiting event hosted by CU Grow, Deborah Romain, the CEO of Deb Romain Consulting, LLC, decided to apply and was accepted into the program. The networking opportunities provided by CU Grow allowed Deborah to enhance her sales pitch and marketing skills. This, in turn, helped the company diversify its portfolio and explore new markets.

#### **Results:**

The participation in CU Grow helped Deb Romain Consulting, LLC increase its gross revenue by 43% in just one year. The company began winning more profitable projects with clients that pay within a net 30 days, which positively impacted business in multiple ways. For example, they recently won the contract to provide signage at the new Columbia University Tennis Center, as well as contracts with others. The program also facilitated creative collaborations with other businesses. Deb Romain Consulting, LLC expanded its services beyond healthcare to include academic, residential, and government work. Since participating in CU Grow, the company won multiple contracts with commercial and non-governmental organizations. The new external clients included Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), New York City School Construction Authority, White Plains Hospital (CAMS), and the Wildlife Conservation Society.



# Developing a Business Plan to Secure Government Contracts and Expand Client Base

Wendy Peters of JWP Corp

2020 Cohort

The case of JWP Corp demonstrates how CU Grow's growth plan and forecasting components can help MWL companies focus on their numbers and plan for growth. The CU Grow program also provided networking opportunities that led to referrals and new government contracts. The decision of Wendy Peters, CEO, to focus deeply within her business was critical to achieving success.

### **Challenge:**

Before 2020, Wendy Peters, CEO of JWP Corp, focused on building the company's reputation as a general contractor specializing in carpentry and interiors in the residential construction sector. While the company had one government contract, JWP Corp was not actively pursuing public sector work.

#### **Solutions:**

Wendy enrolled in the CU Grow program to improve her business acumen. The program's key deliverables, including developing a growth plan and forecasting components, encouraged her to focus on the numbers in a way she hadn't before. Working with her coach, Wendy reevaluated business operations and implemented several changes to scale the business.

#### **Results:**

After completing CU Grow, JWP Corp made connections outside of Columbia University through referrals from cohort colleagues and other professionals Wendy met during the program. Through these referrals, the company was awarded a \$500,000 contract with the NYC Mayor's Office of Management and Budget and worked on multiple projects with the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) under a job-order contract.



# **Developing Marketing Skills to Secure Multi-Year Contracts**

Michael Reed of Elite Construction Company of NY, LLC

2021 Cohort

The case study of Elite Construction Company of NY, LLC testifies to the value of participating in programs like CU Grow to network and develop long-term strategic plans to propel business growth. Michael Reed, CEO, gained valuable insights through the CU Grow program that allowed him to develop marketing skills and take risks to pursue opportunities outside of his usual clientele.

#### **Challenge:**

Prior to attending the CU Grow program, Michael Reed, CEO of Elite Construction Company of NY, was solely focused on the day-to-day operations of his business, leaving little time for networking or long-term strategic planning.

### **Solution:**

Michael enrolled in the CU Grow program to learn how to leverage his time to keep the business running smoothly while planning for growth. He credits the program for teaching him marketing skills that have better positioned his company in the marketplace and for encouraging him to take risks to gain new clients.

#### **Results:**

Today, Michael has secured several multi-year contracts with institutions outside of Columbia, ensuring the sustainability of his company for years to come as he continues to plan for growth. He is finalizing a joint venture with an engineering firm and a multi-year contract with The Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY). Additionally, he has secured multi-year contracts with Nassau Community College for the renovation of their administrative buildings (\$1.1M) and with both Union Free School Districts of Westbury (\$265K) and Baldwin (\$495K) as a project manager for their Capital Improvements Program.



# **Breaking Into New Sectors with CU Grow Program**

LaChena Clark of Sudsy Water Laundry

2017 Cohort

The case of Sudsy Water Laundry demonstrates the success of CU Grow's emphasis on networking and on reframing a business pitch to break into new sectors. Participation in CU Grow has led MWL entrepreneurs like LaChena Clark, founder and president of Sudsy Water Laundry, to new opportunities, such as securing contracts with anchor institutions.

### **Challenge:**

LaChena wanted to expand her business beyond running brick-and-mortar laundromats in Harlem and offering laundry services to residential buildings. However, she did not know exactly how to break into new sectors to grow her clientele.

#### **Solution:**

In 2017, LaChena joined the first cohort of the CU Grow program to expand her network and gain the insights she needed to expand her business. Through the program, she honed her sales knowledge and worked with her coach to develop an elevator pitch that explained the need for laundry services in the built environment. CU Grow helped LaChena recognize the value of her company as a commodity and introduced her to potential clients who required education on the various facets of the laundry service industry.

#### **Results:**

As a result of her participation in the program, LaChena was introduced to buyers from anchor institutions, including New York University. Over the past four years, she has earned approximately \$10,000 annually through contracts with NYU's Drama School and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World. Additionally, LaChena became the first woman to own and operate a laundry room on NYCHA residential property. The 200-square-foot space services 2,000+ residents at Polo Grounds in Harlem (at 155th Street and 8th Avenue). LaChena also gained new business when work was being done on the gas functions in a new Columbia building, which required Columbia to take the laundry rooms offline for three months; Sudsy Water provided pick-up and drop-off laundry service to all the residents of the building during this time. An opportunity arose, and her company was ready and met the challenge. Thanks to her work with CU Grow, LaChena's entrepreneurship has been featured in the New York Times, and she has won several awards for her success.



# Leveraging Business Education to Achieve 30% Revenue Growth and Secure Major Contracts

Joanna Pertz of Joanna Pertz Landscape Architecture

2021 Cohort

The case of Joanna Pertz Landscape Architecture illustrates the importance and impact of the business education provided by CU Grow. The program supplied Joanna with the tools and support needed to take a step back and critically evaluate her business strategy. As a result, she was able to focus on financial analysis and building the business, leading to significant revenue growth and the ability to secure major contracts with prestigious institutions.

### **Challenge:**

After owning her architectural landscaping firm for 17 years, Joanna focused on steadily growing her business and carrying out day-to-day operations. However, she had never taken a business course before and felt limited in her ability to strategically plan for growth.

#### **Solution:**

Joanna enrolled in the CU Grow program, which provided her with a comprehensive business education. The program allowed Joanna to take a deep dive into her business strategy while receiving support along the way. It also afforded her the opportunity to see her business through a new lens. While in the program, she was encouraged to spend time on financial analysis and building the business instead of focusing only on providing services. She also empowered her staff by elevating them to decision-making positions and building a wider group of specialists working within the company.

### **Results:**

Joanna Pertz Landscape Architecture experienced a 30% increase in gross revenue between 2021 and 2022 after completing the CU Grow program. The firm's growth structure allowed for expansion in ways that would not have been possible before, including securing a \$325,000 contract with NYU Langone/Health, a \$250,000 contract with NYU Langone Health/Brooklyn Ambulance, and a \$160,000 contract with Hunter College Playground.

### **Portfolios of Excellence**



#### **Joanna Pertz Landscape Architecture**

#### The Alumni Courtyard and NYU Langone Medical Center

Joanna Pertz Landscape Architecture designed this courtyard as a plaza that is open and flexible, accommodating events, lectures, work sessions, casual dining and everyday campus life.





**Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT)** | **Updated Signage**The updated interior signage was designed to reinforce the building name, facilitate wayfinding, and create visual interest.



#### **Elite Construction Company of NY, LLC**

Westbury UFSD | Additions, Alterations, and Updates With a construction cost of \$58.6M, the scope of work for the middle and high school renovations included upgrades for 26 classrooms, cafeterias, science rooms, ceilings + floors + casework, security systems, roof, boiler plant, masonry, electrical service, and parking lots.



#### **Sudsy Water Laundry**

Polo Grounds NYCHA Housing Complex | New Laundry Room
The space in Harlem has new energy-efficient washers, new
lighting, new tables and new paint.



# **Chapter 4: The Future**



(L-R): Allan Suarez (AR Construction), Darnell Hicks (CU Residential), Jose Rosa (Commercial Portfolio), Diane Moore, (CleanWork Solutions), Scharlene de la Cruz (CUFO), and Pietro Calabretta (AR Construction) appear at ground up building built by AR Construction.

Since its formal launch in 2017, Columbia University's CU Grow program has become a cornerstone of the university's commitment to prioritizing supplier diversity and vendor development. An extension of Columbia's demonstrated good-faith efforts to utilize MWL businesses for CUFO's contracting needs, the program continues to grow with each passing year, connecting more MWL vendors with more opportunities to improve their business operations and win more contracts. CU Grow serves as a model not only for internal diversity efforts at CU but also for other universities in New York and beyond.

In recent years, many universities across the U.S. have begun investing in supplier diversity programs. For example, some universities have developed supplier diversity programs in partnership with general contractors who are typically multinational companies overseeing a single capital project. The

participants in these programs are groomed to become subcontractors under that specific General Contractor. While many other universities have launched successful supplier diversity programs, the CU Grow program differs in that it is longer in duration and more robust; it offers participants the opportunity to be "seen" by all of CUFO's prime vendors, thereby touching every aspect of building projects. For these reasons, CU Grow is unique in its scope.

Although Columbia's CU Grow program is back underway despite the recent global pandemic, CUFO has six priorities in its strategic plan to expand the program for the future:

**1. Help grow subcontractors into primes:**Ultimately, CU Grow aims to help MWL subcontractors develop their capacity for

more and larger projects that offer greater financial stability. One way they're doing this is by helping participants access back-end support for tasks in areas like accounting, web development and IT services, quality assurance, and Human Resources. This support comes through partnerships with organizations that provide technical support for small businesses. For example, starting with the 2023 cohort, CU Grow has partnered with the large construction insurance firm Turner Surety and Insurance Brokerage (TSIB), who will evaluate CU Grow participants' business insurance coverage to ensure they have the right type and amount of insurance for the jobs they are bidding on. CU Grow alumni will also be offered this same service at no cost.

2. Continually reassess areas of need across Columbia University that can be supported by CU Grow participants and alumni, especially where they are not already deployed: CU Grow will continue to explore innovative opportunities to expand supplier diversity, seeking needs that MWL businesses have resources to fulfill. This entails continually examining the university's current vendor needs and finding contracts for CU Grow participants and alumni to bid on, especially multi-year task order agreements, which provide consistent revenue and allow a firm to be deployed quickly. Two MWL businesses who were successfully contracted recently are Deb Romain Consulting and Quality Wet Paint. Deb Romain Consulting has worked on numerous projects at CU and, most recently, won the signage award for the newly constructed tennis center at Baker Field Athletics Complex. Quality Wet Paint won the contract to paint the understructure of the tennis center. As CU expands its footprint in Manhattanville, the Baker Field Athletics

Complex, and other Columbia campuses, there will be even more opportunities for hiring MWL vendors.

### 3. Support firms and workers in accessing union contracts and jobs:

- Agreements that allow for non-union firms: Columbia University negotiated Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) on its construction of the Manhattanville campus to allow MWL non-union firms to participate in the project and use their own labor. On Columbia's most recent project, the Columbia Business School, there was a \$25M carve-out in the PLA to utilize MWL firms. In the future, CU will look to create more PLAs to continue providing opportunities to non-union firms.
- A pathway to union labor for MWL workers: CUFO oversees many building projects that, by policy, require unionized workers. Oftentimes, construction workers are not members of a trade union, and it's hard to become a union member. These workers are automatically disqualified from certain large-scale union projects. In 2018, CUFO partnered with Pathways to Apprenticeship (P2A), a preapprenticeship program exclusively for minority and women workers and Upper Manhattan residents to gain access to union construction apprenticeships. Because of P2A's direct-entry status, they can present an apprenticeship candidate to the union at any time, without waiting for the union's open membership period. This program not only helps these workers gain quicker access to union employment but also facilitates pay increases, better benefits and safer working conditions.

- 4. Deepen CUFO's relationships with institutions and BIPOC businesses throughout NYC as a member of Ascend NYC Anchor Council: CUFO's involvement with Ascend NYC and the nationwide Ascend network ensures that they have the connections to continue facilitating relationships that help alumni access opportunities beyond Columbia's walls. This network spans industries including healthcare, education, food businesses and arts + culture.
- 5. Develop sustainable relationships with CU Grow alumni: The purpose of CU Grow isn't just to award contracts to MWL vendors but to build and sustain long-lasting professional relationships with them. CUFO will continue to cultivate these relationships by:
  - Tracking CU Grow alumni in greater detail after graduation to monitor the health of their businesses.
  - Understanding when and where challenges occur in the bid process all the way through the project completion phase to ensure MWL vendors have the support needed to complete the project.
  - Serving as a liaison between primes and MWL contractors and between Columbia University's various procurement departments and MWL primes.
  - Expanding networking and job opportunities for alumni beyond the CUFO domain, creating more channels to other university departments and anchor institutions in the region beyond Columbia's campus.
- **6. Engage CU Grow alumni in returning to CU Grow as coaches:** So far, as a result of implementing their strategic growth plans and growing their businesses, and, in turn,

developing expertise, executives of three CU Grow participant firms returned to serve as coaches: William Diaz, of ESC Cabling; Deborah Romain, of Deb Romain Consulting; and Allan Suarez, of All Renovations Construction.

CUFO is developing ways to engage alumni in contributing to the program with future cohorts.

Collectively, these priorities forge a path to an increasingly successful future for MWL vendors, beginning with Columbia University and expanding to other local communities. With the multidimensional investments CU Grow makes in MWL vendors, CUFO is paving the way for a more equitable contracting and labor market, one that generates collective impact and increased market access for NYC's BIPOC business owners, women entrepreneurs and locally owned businesses.

"The Construction Industry is experiencing rapid change, marked by heightened calls for enhanced efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

The future marketplace demands a competitive edge for diverse businesses, with modernized practices designed to deliver efficiency, high performance, and innovation. The CU Grow program provides MWL firms with the premier tools necessary to achieve future success."



Keith M. George Senior Project Manager, CUFO Planning and Capital Project Management



# Acknowledgements

We sincerely appreciate our valued partners, CU Grow participants, Columbia University's colleagues, and the Upper Manhattan and Bronx communities' unwavering support. Their contributions have been instrumental to the success of the CU Grow: Vendor Development Program and to Columbia University's overall commitment to advancing opportunities for minority-, women-, and locally-owned businesses (MWL). We are grateful to have such excellent partners by our side, and we look forward to exploring new opportunities for collaboration in the future.

#### **COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

Lee C. Bollinger, President

#### Columbia University Facilities and Operations

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