

# Minority hiring goals out of reach, construction industry finds

Contractors say city's quotas exceed supply of firms to meet them

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The de Blasio administration has [ambitious goals](#) for minority- and women-owned businesses, but in the construction industry, few such firms have the capacity to meet them, an industry group's study has found.

The Building Trades Employers' Association, which represents large contractors and estimates that 10% or 12% are owned by minorities or women, commissioned a study examining the ability of city construction firms certified as minority- and women-owned business enterprises to do work available to them.

The study found a scarcity of capable MWBE firms in a number of trades. Only [32 certified](#) to do heavy construction on streets, bridges and sewers had the wherewithal to complete contracts larger than \$6 million; such contracts make up 86% of the \$2.9 billion the city spent on this work between 2012 and 2015. Of the 32, only one was black-owned.

Yet the city wants 30% of its contracting dollars spent on minority- and women-owned firms, not including affordable-housing construction, social services by nonprofits and some other work.

Louis Coletti, president and CEO of the BTEA, said programs to support and grow MWBEs need an overhaul, as opposed to repeatedly raising hiring targets.

"These programs have been going on for 30 years, and I think we need to find a way to progress a lot further and a lot faster," he said.

In addition to the capacity assessment, Coletti's group released a policy paper outlining recommendations for how the city can [address obstacles to MWBE growth](#). It cited a lack of financing and bonding, high insurance costs and limitations on mentoring programs, among other factors. The mayor's office said it has two loan programs for minority contractors and is seeking state permission to expand mentor programs.

BTEA's paper began with a quote attributed to Confucius: "When goals can't be reached, don't adjust the goals; adjust the action steps."