

More than 20 Kansas City firms now more qualified to win new KCI terminal contracts

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Twenty-five local businesses owned by women or minorities are graduating Thursday from a construction management program offered by the developer of the new terminal at Kansas City International Airport.

These firms now are better positioned to win contracts working on the \$1.5 billion project.

It's part of the city's goal to make the airport a transformative project that improves the lives of Kansas City workers.

The strategic partnership program trained contractors and management firms on construction fundamentals like bonding and estimating.

Technical training provided by big companies: Clark, Weitz and Clarkson Construction is designed to help smaller Kansas City companies compete for a piece of the massive airport project, which is expected to provide about 5,000 jobs during the next four years.

Daniel Felder is a general contractor who specializes in concrete. He believes the program will help his company go from good to great.

"I was born on the east side of Kansas City, born and raised, grew up there," Felder said. "I'm a graduate of Westport High School. It's a big deal for me to have this opportunity to go back to my community and find folks, who oftentimes have been left out of the process quite frankly. Give them an opportunity to make a really good wage through the union dynamic."

Fifty-four minority and women-owned firms in Kansas City have now graduated from the construction management program, which is set up to be like an MBA for those in the construction business.

Those who complete it aren't guaranteed a contract working on the airport project, but many say they will be stronger bidders as a result, and more attractive candidates for other construction work.

The local firms say if they do win airport contracts they would have to expand their workforce. And all are committed to hiring Kansas Citians and providing training through trade unions that will earn them livable wages and good benefits for the rest of their careers.