



# Encouraging Hispanic Construction Labor

By Kim Slowey

Census Bureau numbers show that, in 2015, Hispanics edged out their white, non-Hispanic counterparts in New York City's construction workforce and represented 37.75% of all workers, according to a recent New York City Building Congress report. The margin, only 0.01%, was very small, but it represents a departure from a time when white workers dominated the industry. In 2008, for example, white workers represented 43% of the city's construction industry, while Hispanics were only 31%.

There were 10.3 million workers employed in the US construction industry last year, and almost 3 million of those were Hispanic, a near 29% share for that demographic, according to 2016 Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) figures.

There are some, however, who say that these estimates are low and don't reflect the reality of many job sites.

Anthony Sierra, president of commercial and residential construction company JP Sierra in

Tampa, Florida, said the projects he visits have closer to 70% to 80% Hispanics on the job.

BLS data is collected using sampling across the US, which could explain some of the difference. In addition, there are likely wide swings in the number of Hispanic workers between some areas of the country and states close to the border like Florida. Add to that the reluctance of many to divulge information around immigration status, and the potential grows even more for low figures of Hispanic representation in the industry.

What is certain, however, is that no matter how many Hispanic workers there are, their participation is critical in the all-hands-on-deck environment caused by the shortage of skilled construction workers.

### The labor shortage and a shift in political winds

During the Great Recession, a major portion of tradesmen took jobs in other industries, and many foreign workers headed home. Between April 2006 and January 2011, the construction industry lost more than 40% of its work force, cutting nearly 2.3 million jobs. In addition, a 2015 Pew



Research report found that more Mexicans were leaving the US than entering.

Because of retiring workers and a lack of interest on the part of younger people, there aren't enough workers to meet the upswell in recent

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**Description of project:**  
The LIRR Expansion Project from Floral Park to Hicksville is a strategic component in Governor Andrew Cuomo's comprehensive plan to transform New York's vital transportation infrastructure while improving the economy, environment, and future of Long Island. The Expansion is decades in the making. Residents and commuters along the Main Line corridor have long sought a mass transit solution to reduce congestion, improve safety and the environment, and provide an appealing alternative to driving, with minimal disruption to existing services and without residential property takings. The new plan includes construction of a 9.8 mile third track between the Floral Park and Hicksville stations, the elimination of 7 grade crossings to improve safety and reduce road traffic, and upgrades to infrastructure, stations, and parking along the route.

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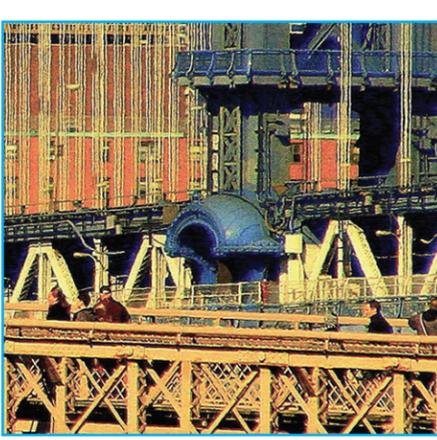
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**NORTHEAST EVENTS FOR YOUR BUSINESS**

**2017**

**Construction Management Training Program Launch**  
Tuesday, August 22, 2017, 10:00 am–1:00 pm  
Lehman College, Music Building, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West, Bronx, NY  
Main Sponsor(s): Small Business Administration, Bronx Small Business Development Center  
Contact: Bronx Small Business Development Center, 718-960-8806, [sbdc.bronx@lehman.cuny.edu](mailto:sbdc.bronx@lehman.cuny.edu)  
Fee: Free; registration required  
Meet with prime contractors. Attend a panel discussion about the steps to obtaining contracts. Build business capacity in: construction licensing and bidding; construction management best practices; estimating, scheduling, and budget preparation; negotiating contract conditions; bonding and financing; mentor-protégé programs; minority- and woman-owned business certification; BidLinX. Since its start in 1987, the Bronx SBDC expert advisors have worked directly with 16,977 businesses, helping them to invest \$146,739,624 in the area's economy, and to create or save 5,598 jobs. SBDCs throughout America provide a vast array of technical assistance at no cost to small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs. The SBDCs are a unique collaboration of SBA federal funds, state and local governments, and private sector resources.

**How to Access Business Services and Funding**  
Thursday, August 24, 2017, 9:30 am–11:00 am  
Old Saybrook Town Hall, 302 Main Street, Old Saybrook, CT

**Main Sponsor(s): SCORE Southeastern Connecticut**  
Contact: Ward Feirer, [scorechapter@gmail.com](mailto:scorechapter@gmail.com)  
Fee: Free; registration required  
In this interactive workshop with experts Elizabeth Wallace, Director of Business Services at the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, and Ann Chambers, Director of Loan Programs at the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region, you will learn how to connect to the abundance of programs and services Connecticut offers to help businesses achieve success, including licensing and registration, real estate, research and data, as well as funding opportunities and eligibility. SCORE, America's premier source of free and confidential small business advice for entrepreneurs and small businesses, is a nonprofit resource partner with the Small Business Administration.

**Getting the Most out of a Trade Show**  
Friday, August 25, 2017, 10:00 am–12:00 pm  
North Kingstown Public Library, 100 Boone Street, North Kingstown, RI  
Main Sponsor(s): SCORE Counselor Bob Salvas  
Contact: SCORE Counselor Bob Salvas, 401-359-1602, [bob@bobsalvas.com](mailto:bob@bobsalvas.com)  
Fee: Free; registration required  
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