

MIRADOR Enterprises, Inc.

What drives people to make that critical decision to quit their secure job and start a business? Yolie Diaz, owner of Mirador Enterprises, Inc. had many reasons to justify going in to business but the one over-riding factor was her eleven year old son Christian. As a single mother, full time employee and part-time business owner, in 2004, she decided it would be in the best interest of her son's future to take her business to another level. She mustered the courage and left a good paying job as Regional Accounting Manager for Texas Gas Service in order to pursue her dream of becoming a full time business Owner.

"I felt that it would be best to go into business full-time and this way I could develop and grow the business so that one day my son Christian could take over the company". Ms. Diaz says "it has not been easy balancing her personal/family life, since becoming a business owner requires dedicating long work hours to ensure the continued success of the business". Growing the business did not come without major struggles. MIRADOR had to bid extremely competitive on TXDOT and other contracts and even lost money on some jobs. The company also encountered accidents, had equipment stolen, dealt with employee issues but through hard work and perseverance turned things around and made MIRADOR a successful small business. Through lessons learned, the company is staying focused and maintaining a diverse business and customer mix in Facilities Management and Maintenance, Environmental Services and implementation of strong Project Management processes and procedures. Ms. Diaz says this will help handle potential business downturns in specific markets.

Ms. Diaz started MIRADOR as a part-time business in October of 2002. She started small, with only two employees providing landscaping and grounds maintenance services to commercial businesses. A big step for her business occurred when she was part of the TXDOT TAP (Technical Assistance Program) where she received training and technical assistance in several business related areas like construction management, project management, contract law, bidding, estimating, bonding and increased knowledge of internal operations. She learned about the small business designation of being a Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) for TXDOT and became certified in the program. A DBE provides an advantage in securing contract opportunities since federal, state and city regulations require that a percentage goal of contracts is set a side for DBE's.

Ms. Diaz's next goal was to apply and obtain a U.S. Small Business Administration 8(a) designation for small disadvantaged businesses. "I have good friends and relatives that have been part of the SBA 8(a) program and they encouraged me to do the same for my business". Being a certified 8(a) has helped her business tremendously and these certifications along with the training and development she received from the SBA helped Ms. Diaz take MIRADOR to the next level.

The SBA certification as a small disadvantaged business offers a broad scope of business development services in the area of federal procurement. In 2006, Mirador Enterprises, Inc. became certified into the SBA 8(a) program. At around the same time period MIRADOR became certified in the Federal Hubzone program. Now armed with her 8(a) and Hubzone certifications, Ms. Diaz aggressively pursues the federal contracting offices to seek contract opportunities. Since her designation, she has been awarded approximately \$4,500,000 in federal contracts both as a prime and subcontractor. One of the contracts that MIRADOR recently completed was for the construction of a first class Running Track and Field for the 6th Brigade at Fort Bliss. Her high standards for completing federal contracts have lead to new contract opportunities at Fort Bliss and other government agencies including the Department of Interior's National Park Service agency for which MIRADOR just completed a project at McBride Canyon.

Ms. Diaz started MIRADOR with two employees and now has fifteen employees. She says "the employees are 200% what makes this company. They are important beyond important, they are the heartbeat, they are the everything of my company" she says. Of course, Ms. Diaz makes sure that everyone is working toward the ultimate goal – a happy customer. The firm is diversifying back to the original business plan with focus on Environmental Services, along with strong Facilities Management and Maintenance support services.