



# ILLINOIS TOLLWAY NEWS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **ILLINOIS TOLLWAY CONGRATULATES FIRMS GRADUATING FROM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY HACIA**

**DOWNERS GROVE, IL** – The Illinois Tollway celebrates the leaders of the six firms graduating today from its Technical Assistance Program administered by the Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA) Scholarship & Education Foundation.

“We are pleased to recognize the hard work these business owners have put in over the past six months, building the expertise needed to take their companies to the next level,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director José Alvarez. “With all the work the Tollway has planned and the state’s new capital program, the demand for skilled business owners and diverse businesses is there, and we need small and diverse companies that are ready to compete for work.”

The Illinois Tollway Technical Assistance Program graduates were recognized for their accomplishments on Thursday, January 23, at a ceremony in at HACIA’s offices in Chicago. The six graduating firms are from various industries, including structural steel, information technology, electrical contracting, carpentry and drywall painting, asphalt, painting and flooring.

- Jameel Lunsford Jr., All J Steel Inc. – Darien
- Jose Abrego, Advanced Contractor Solutions Inc. – Chicago
- Joanne E. Szymel, Guepard Group Corp. – Barrington
- Daniel Rojas, Metromex Contractors Inc. – McCook
- Erika Venegas, Pro Nova Contracting LLC – North Aurora
- Kenneth Early, RIMCA Inc. – Melrose Park

The Illinois Tollway Technical Assistance Program prepares emerging and established transportation-related construction firms including disadvantaged, minority- and women-owned firms, as well as veteran-owned and small businesses, to participate as prime contractors and subcontractors on highway and vertical construction contracts, including the Tollway 15-year, \$14 billion *Move Illinois* capital program.

The HACIA Scholarship & Education Foundation is one of seven organizations that the Tollway partners with on the Illinois Tollway Technical Assistance Program. The program is designed to assist businesses gain the experience and expertise to handle more complex projects while increasing the pool of contractors available to perform work on Tollway projects. There are a total of 12 locations providing technical assistance for emerging businesses in Chicago, Cook County, the south suburbs and Rockford.

As a result of the Tollway's investment, approximately 1,766 bids have been submitted by clients since 2017, including 377 on Tollway projects. These bids submitted on Tollway projects have resulted in 26 firms participating in winning bids in 2017 and 59 contracts in 2018. In 2019, 167 of the bids submitted on Tollway projects resulted in 34 firms winning work as primes or subcontractors on 25 contracts.

Participants in the Technical Assistance Program receive comprehensive, customized business development assistance to build financial understanding and business plan development for increased business stability and growth in the transportation-related construction industry. Services are customized to the assessed strengths, challenges and needs of participating firms. This includes education, guidance and feedback on general business and construction-specific operations, including strategic planning and assistance with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) pre-qualification application.

Each participant in the program administered by HACIA Scholarship & Education Foundation must have a minimum of five years in business with subcontractor experience on major highways, roads, bridges or vertical construction projects, earn annual revenue of at least \$450,000, possess moderate computer skills and be proficient in blueprint reading, general documents and specifications.

**About the HACIA Scholarship & Education Foundation**

The HACIA Scholarship & Education Foundation (HACIA SEF) is a non-profit 501c(3) organization whose mission is to provide on-going training and educational services to businesses and their employees in the construction related industry. HACIA SEF strives to promote awareness of professional career opportunities and continues to raise the bar in its goal to promote the future leaders in the fields of technology, architecture, engineering, construction & professional services industries. HACIA SEF believes all qualified construction business should have equal access to opportunities and education in their industry.

**About the Illinois Tollway**

The Illinois Tollway is a user-fee system that receives no state or federal funds for maintenance and operations. The agency maintains and operates 294 miles of roadways in 12 counties in Northern Illinois, including the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88), the Veterans Memorial Tollway (I-355), the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90), the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80) and the Illinois Route 390 Tollway.

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