



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY

OFFICE OF
**ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT**

Hanford Site Contractor Invests in Local Small Businesses

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Pictured from left, Grace Lieberman, Elite Construction & Development director of business development; Victor Espinoza, Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS) procurement specialist; Jose Legarreta, WRPS procurement manager; Staci Downing, WRPS Small Business Program manager; Wes Bryan, WRPS president and project manager; Trini Garibay, Elite CEO; David Magaña, Elite chief operating officer; Levi Sherman, Elite construction manager; Scott Kukes, Elite project manager; CJ Black, Elite project executive; and Kyler Davenport, Elite environmental safety and health specialist were among those who attended an event to present a DOE Mentor-Protégé Program completion certificate to Elite at a WRPS facility.

RICHLAND, Wash. — EM Office of River Protection (ORP) tank operations contractor Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS) recently awarded a certificate for completing the DOE **Mentor-Protégé Program** to a local company.

The program is an avenue for DOE contractors to assist small businesses by enhancing their capabilities to perform contracts and subcontracts for federal agencies. The company, Elite Construction & Development of Pasco, Washington, partnered with WRPS to support the **Hanford Site** cleanup mission.

“Part of our commitment is to help small and disadvantaged businesses to be successful,” said Nicole Schuller, acting assistant manager for procurement. “Mentoring small, local businesses helps ensure they’re fully equipped to compete for federal contracts, which invests in the local economy and enables more families to continue the Hanford cleanup legacy.”



Elite Construction & Development assisted in constructing a liquid retention basin, one of many significant upgrades required to support the Direct-Feed Low-Activity Waste Program to treat tank waste at the Hanford Site.

WRPS mentored Elite in developing government-furnished property procedures, invoicing and closeout procedures, implementing a new accounting system and developing a quality assurance program. Elite also accompanied WRPS to outreach events.

The relationship between WRPS and Elite began in fiscal year 2019 with a mentor-protégé agreement and expanded to include work on multiple projects.

Fiscal year 2023 marked the end of Elite’s fifth and final year in the program.

“We appreciate WRPS for inviting us to take part in the DOE mentor-protégé partnership and providing us the opportunity to prove ourselves in the EM sector,” said Trini Garibay, Elite president and CEO. “The knowledge gained in the past five years has transformed our organization into the best version of itself. We look forward to sustaining our role as a trusted partner.”

Beyond the Mentor-Protégé Program, WRPS awarded more than \$4.6 million to small businesses in fiscal year 2023, including small, disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, veteran-owned small businesses, and historically underutilized businesses.