



Reading the Deep: Geodynamics CEO, Sloan Freeman (right), reviews a hydrographic survey with Geodynamic's certified hydrographer, David Bernstein.

“The program has helped us grow,” says Sloan, who started her company with her husband and another scientist, all working from their respective homes on laptops. Now Geodynamics has 10 employees in a custom office space. “The biggest thing that has changed is that we started out as a subcontractor to a subcontractor way down the line of contracts. Now we’re prime contractors working directly with the federal government.”

These days, Geodynamics is attracting interest from other large consulting firms hoping to build partnerships with them under the program. But Sloan is sticking with Stantec: “We have such a great-quality, long-term partnership,” she says.

Thinking outside the Checkbox


Likewise, the Stantec teams working with Sloan see partnering with small and disadvantaged firms as an opportunity to do more than just tick off a checkbox. It’s a chance to support the small businesses in our communities and keep our local economies strong, and a chance to build strong partnerships with these companies.

But this needs to be done in the right way, according to Stantec’s Environmental Services federal sector leader, Dom Kempson (Cottage Grove, Wisconsin); Small & Disadvantaged Business program manager, Jim Schaefer (Columbus, Ohio); and federal marketing leader, Katie Prince (Laurel, Maryland).

“Our small and disadvantaged business partners get frustrated when a large firm is being impersonal,” Dom says. “Our goal is to have a different, more supportive, compassionate program. We want to be a true business partner.”

Why? “Stantec’s not the only player out there,” says Jim, a recent Stantec recruit and former small-business owner. “Small businesses have choices, especially those that have a good resume. It’s advantageous to us not only to play by the rules but also to lend an ear and go the extra mile.”

That means offering support that others can’t. “When we partner, our partnerships aren’t purely at the project level,” Katie says. “We also support our small business partners by mentoring them through the proposal process so they have a great final product.”

This strategy paid off when Geodynamics recently bid as prime contractor on a federal reselection proposal and called us in as the subcontractor. They could have selected other firms, but our long-standing relationship made a difference. Now Katie and Sloan are waiting to hear if our alliance, in its newest form, will again prove successful and lead to more partnerships in the future. 

Small Business, Big Opportunity

Tracking beach erosion. Using sonar to map underwater terrain for the US Army Corps of Engineers. Helping the Navy identify and avoid damaging essential fish habitats and cultural artifacts like sunken ships. It’s all in a day’s work for Sloan Freeman, CEO of Geodynamics LLC and professional land surveyor (PLS) licensed in Newport, North Carolina. Her small business protects and preserves her community shorelines by providing specialized hydrographic surveying services.

Growth can be difficult for a small business like Geodynamics. To help, the federal government launched the U.S. Small Business Administration program, which makes sure that businesses identified as small or disadvantaged have access to federal opportunities that could help them grow. The government does this by setting aside some federal work that can be awarded only to prime contractors that have been identified through the program or to large firms, like Stantec, that partner with and support them.



Dom Kempson
Cottage Grove, Wisconsin



Jim Schaefer
Columbus, Ohio



Katie Prince
Laurel, Maryland