

From: donotreply@portseattle.org [mailto:donotreply@portseattle.org]

Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2019 8:35 AM

To: Commission-Office

Subject: Contact the Commission

Comment My name is Vida Hernandez, a WMBE certified small business owner. I recently bid on the Lost and Found management services contract RFP 18-18.

Port of Seattle Lost and Found was privatized as a way to provide a training ground for disadvantaged women and families in need of job skills and experience. YWCA of King County was contracted to manage Ports Lost and Found in 2002. I have been running Lost and Found under contract with YWCA and the Port until YWCA decided to end their contract the end of 2017. Port of Seattle asked me to stay on with the Port to provide continuity and I agreed.

Port of Seattle came to the decision to contract the Lost and Found again. I was told the decision was made as a way to provide small business opportunities, in support of small businesses owned by minority woman.

I was inspired to start my own small business and submit my own proposal to continue to run the Lost and Found.

I believed I was a perfect fit, qualified and more than capable... over 15 years of Port of Seattle SeaTac Airport Lost and Found experience, high customer satisfaction rate, no incidences, successful internal audits with no findings, continued process improvements, assisted with the development of two inventory systems for Lost and Found, excellent rapport, strong relationships with internal customers, managers, directors and stakeholders, great news stories and representation of the Port of Seattle through multiple interviews with Evening Magazine, Kiro 7, King 5, KUOW, Seattle Metropolitan Magazine, Community Channel, SeaTac Coalition, Komo 4 and Seattle Times.

I also believed that the Port of Seattle wanted the Lost and Found to continue to be a place where disadvantaged women are inspired and empowered.

I've always enjoyed the part of my job where I get to hire women who need someone to believe in them, just as I needed when I started back out in the workforce after tough life circumstances. Port of Seattle provided me with the platform to use all that I've experienced in my life to help other women. Currently, all my employees are disadvantaged minority women who needed a training ground. Lost and Found has not only been a place where people find their property... it's been a place many find job skills, experience and self-confidence.

I feel that if the Port of Seattle wants to promote small businesses owned by disadvantaged minority women, there needs to be changes in the RFP process to make it possible. I believe there are great Port of Seattle commissioners, directors and managers making positive changes but there are some employees under them making it impossible for those changes to take place.

I formed my company "All Inclusive Lost and Found Services LLC" and obtained all necessary licenses, insurance and business loan along with obtaining Washington State Minority Women's

Business Enterprises certification and submitted my proposal for RFP 18-18 to run Lost and Found.

I was immediately contacted and advised to have a discussion with Ports workplace responsibility. After discovering that I had no involvement in the writing of the RFP and since I was only an emergency hire during the transition, workplace responsibility determined it would not be a conflict of interest for me to submit my proposal and to proceed with my interest in the Lost and Found contract.

In the end, Hallmark Aviation was awarded the contract, a corporate California based business with no Port of Seattle, SeaTac Airport or Washington State Lost and Found experience.

I successfully ran the operation while helping many women, I gave the Port my best for over 15 years and I was excited it turned into a very inspiring small business opportunity where I can continue to provide what I like to call a "compass place" for many needing to find their way. I didn't expect to be favored during the RFP process, I only wanted it to be fair.

In the same brief meeting I was informed the contract was not awarded to me, I was also informed of my last day which is April 12th. I asked for the reason and her answer was that I bid too high. I feel that for whatever reasons they had not to choose me, conversations and negotiation could of taken place to make the opportunity possible but that didn't happen.

This was a perfect opportunity for the Port of Seattle to support a small business owned by a minority woman who had the proven ability and experience to do what the Port needed accomplished... but again, not enough is being done in the process and with the people in position making biased decisions.

I was proud that my children watched how hard their mother worked for something she believed was possible and I hoped to accomplish it so they would be inspired to work hard for what they believe is possible for them. Instead they not only watched their mom lose the contract bid... she lost her job. This is very disheartening for me, after all my hard work, loyalty and commitment ... I'm back to being a single mother with no job. This has not only impacted me as a small business owner, its impacted my family and the women on my team.

A woman I was interviewing recently, said to me "I would really like to work here because there are other women like me"

So much more was lost than 4 amazing women at Lost and Found. I can only hope you will look further into this and that there's accountability and transparency as promised.

Sincerely,
Vida Hernandez