

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS

South Carolina 8(a) Firm Is the National 2009 Minority Small Business of the Year

International Public Works – an 8(a) and service-disabled veteran-owned engineering and construction firm in North Charleston – has grown from a 2002 beginning rooted in adversity into the SBA’s 2009 National Minority Small Business of the Year.



Kai Yeh and Cyrus Sinor

When Kai Yeh lost his job due to corporate restructuring, he contacted Cyrus Sinor – his best friend, fellow engineer and fellow military officer. Together, they decided to open their own engineering firm. International Public Works (IPW) was born.

In 2001, before the business had even opened, IPW faced its first major obstacle when Cyrus had to leave to work overseas until 2003. Although out of the country, he continued via e-mail to help Kai to guide IPW through its initial phase growth. In the meantime, Kai ran IPW out of his kitchen and was unable to take a paycheck for over a year.

Despite the initial difficulty, IPW continued to grow. In its second year of business, the company expanded into the construction field, where its engineering capabilities gave it an edge over the competition. And in 2003, the company was accepted into the SBA’s 8(a) program.

Now, IPW is a \$19.5 million firm with 22 employees that serves both government and private enterprise throughout South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia. Its capabilities include civil design, new construction, operations maintenance and geotechnical services. In 2008, IPW was honored as one of the top 25 of South Carolina’s Fastest Growing Companies, a program sponsored by the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and Elliott Davis, LLC, an accounting and consulting firm. Earlier that year, the Charleston Regional Business Journal named IPW one of the 20 fastest growing companies in the region.

As a small business, IPW is committed to supporting other small businesses throughout the state and region by offering subcontracting opportunities. And as an 8(a) firm, IPW is committed to supporting other minority-owned firms. Approximately 25 percent of its subcontracts go to minority-owned small businesses. IPW also mentors minority-owned firms that have had limited experience with federal contracting.

International Public Works was named the SBA’s 2009 Minority Small Business of the Year on August 28 in Washington, D.C. Previously, IPW was named the 2009 Region IV Minority Small Business of the Year. Both awards recognized the firm for its growth and its outreach efforts among other small businesses.