

## The Nisha Group



Manisha Roberts-Hooks, an African-American single mother of three children, is the owner of The Nisha Group located in Glendale. The Nisha Group is the successor of Nisha's Janitorial Services that provides cleaning services as well as general maintenance care and post-construction cleaning for commercial buildings in southeastern Wisconsin.

Prior to starting The Nisha Group, Ms. Roberts-Hooks worked at WE Energies for thirty years before retiring in 2004 to start The Nisha Group. Along with working full-time at WE Energies, Manisha was involved in numerous entrepreneurial pursuits to earn extra income to support her family. She became an independent art dealer, selling oil paintings and other forms of art to private and commercial collectors and, in 1999, purchased a Coverall Wisconsin Janitorial franchise.

While working at WE Energies, Ms. Roberts-Hooks developed various construction-related skills, including blue print reading, below and above grade construction, management of safety procedures that included compliance with OSHA regulations, shop arithmetic, meter installation, pneumatic equipment and machinery operation, electrical and plumbing fittings, and other skills related to construction in the electrical power industry. As a Coverall franchisee, Manisha gained janitorial trade skills with courses in handling toxic chemicals, advanced sanitation and safety procedures and acquired numerous certifications and the skills necessary to compete in the commercial cleaning industry. Also from her Coverall experience, she gained hands-on experience in competitive bidding, project management, contract fulfillment, personnel administration and general business operations.

During her thirty years in the power industry, Manisha also pursued formal academic training. In 1997, she received an Associates Degree in Supervisory Management from MATC and in 1998; she earned her Bachelor of Arts in Business Management from Concordia University. Finally, in 2005, Manisha obtained a Private Detective Agency License from the State of Wisconsin.

In 2001, Ms. Roberts-Hooks recognized that the profitability of her janitorial business was restrained by the numerous fees she paid for material, janitorial contracts and the use of the Coverall name. She branched out on her own with the establishment of Nisha Janitorial Service and successfully assumed full responsibility for both front and back office operations and, in one year, significantly increased her gross revenue and profitability. Manisha devised a strategy to obtain various certifications to help spur sales growth and offset the disadvantage of being both new, female and an ethnic minority player in the market. These certifications include: Milwaukee County Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), State of Wisconsin Department of Commerce Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Milwaukee Public Schools, Neighborhood Schools Initiative, Women's Business Enterprise (WBE), City of Milwaukee Emerging Business Enterprise (EBE) and U.S. Small Business Administration 8(a) Certification.

Manisha has acquired certification as an Asbestos Supervisor and is scheduled to work with White Glove Environmental and owner London Thomas on South Milwaukee Tech's old vacated building to be razed after the removal of asbestos. London Thomas and Manisha share a joint venture company called Balance Building Maintenance that includes The Nisha Group and White Glove Group. They have contracts for janitorial services with the City of Milwaukee and Summerfest. Together they have the capacity to manage two million square feet.

The Nisha Group has been learning what the General Services Administration (GSA) buys, what contract vehicles exist, how to navigate FedBizOpps, and how to tie into federal procurement opportunities. With the assistance of the local SBA 8(a) staff, The Nisha Group has been developing its GSA documentation to become a GSA approved vendor.

Over the past several months, The Nisha Group has been trying to establish a Mentor-Protégé relationship with Platt Construction. Platt is an award winning, highly successful 8(a) graduate company that has been in the construction business for over twenty years. Platt Construction has the experience, resources and interest to assist in the growth and development of The Nisha Group in the construction sector.

All the above has led to the expansion of The Nisha Group from a basic cleaning service to a full-service building maintenance firm that includes asbestos removal, lead abatement, building security and light repair. The business now has a total of twenty-five employees, half of them part-time. Part of the expansion plan is to have thirty full-time employees by this summer.

Ms. Roberts-Hooks is an ambitious entrepreneur that is determined to capitalize on the janitorial construction and commodities markets. Manisha is a true entrepreneur in the purest sense that embodies the “can do” attitude that produces successful businesses. SBA is proud to be of assistance to Manisha and The Nisha Group as they move forward on the road to success.