

Toki & Associates, Inc.

Toki & Associates, Inc., an African American architectural/engineering firm, was founded in 1987 by Theophilus Iyasele and Olaitan Olapo, both professional engineers. Toki & Associates provides engineering and architectural services to both government and private clients. Toki's services include architectural design, civil engineering, construction, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and structural engineering.



L- Olaitan Olapo; R-Theo Iyasele

Toki's design philosophy provides the client with creative solutions within their budgets and time considerations. They try to balance aesthetic, functional and symbolic elements into their designs and strive for the enrichment of cultural values and respect for historical traditions. The client's design needs and organizational relationships are integrated into the total design process to achieve mutual goal.

For the past nine years, Toki & Associates have been in SBA's 8(a) program. Toki is now being recognized as a very good architectural/engineering firm and not just a minority business enterprise firm. Theophilus and Olaitan attribute this recognition because of being in the 8(a) program. They are now being awarded large contracts as the prime contractor and not being hired because of a minority requirement by local and federal governments.

Getting those contracts proved to be a large challenge. Marketing was difficult because larger firms look at hiring minority firms as a chore or duty imposed on them by the hiring agency. Even the hiring agencies had a reluctance to hire lack owned firms because of the stigma of appearance and of past poor performance. Toki overcame this stigma by replying to almost every Request for Proposal (RFP) that they felt qualified for. They were able to acquire several small projects. Gradually, Toki began to be recognized as a reliable architectural and engineering firm. If Toki didn't have the experience required by the proposal, they associated with a firm that did.

A large break came for Toki in the summer of 2002 when they answered an RFP from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The Proposal was for designing control towers and FAA offices at various airports in an eight state region of the Midwest.

Toki knew they couldn't handle this job on their own and approached a larger architectural firm and asked them to work with them on this project. To their surprise, they accepted and a proposal was submitted as the Toki/Gensler design team. In September 2003, after one year since the submission of the proposal, Toki received a call from the contracting officer of the FAA.

After many conference calls between Toki/Gensler & FAA, they were asked to submit a work plan for the work on the FAA projects. Toki/Gensler was selected, over 16 other firms, to perform these services for a period of four years along with three other firms. Toki was the only minority firm chosen. Toki says, "All this could not have happened without the help and guidance from the SBA."

Today, Toki is a firm of 25 professionals with a goal to serving their clients by listening to their needs and desires and responding with efficient and cost effective solutions. Their relatively small size allows the principals to be actively involved in the management of all their projects and to provide quality services on-time/on-budget. They assign one project manager to work directly with a client throughout all phases of the project.

SBA is proud to have been an integral part in the success of [Toki & Associates](#).

[BACK TO WISCONSIN SBA NEWS](#)