

The UB Law Alumni Association's Social Wellness Committee presents

Navigating NY WBE Certification: Legal Insights and Best Practices

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Thursday, April 10, 2025

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Section 1: Introduction and Purpose

These materials are designed to help attorneys understand the most common grounds for denial of Women-Owned Business Enterprise (“WBE”) certification in New York State. They analyze actual decisions on administrative appeal, explain the regulatory framework under Article 15-A of the Executive Law and 5 NYCRR Part 144, and offer practice-oriented strategies. While each applicant’s case is unique, patterns have emerged in how the New York State Department of Economic Development, Division of Minority and Women’s Business Development (“Division”) evaluates core issues such as ownership, control, capital contribution, independence, and technical competence.

Attorneys advising clients in the application or appeals process can use the materials to:

- Anticipate problematic fact patterns
- Understand how the Division interprets specific regulatory standards
- Evaluate the sufficiency of documentation and corporate governance materials
- Support appeals where the record may have been misunderstood or underdeveloped

The summaries and insights in these materials are drawn from publicly available Recommended Orders and Final Orders issued by the Division or Administrative Law Judges (“ALJs”), between 2016 and 2025. See <https://esd.ny.gov/doing-business-ny/mwbe/mwbe-appeals#denial-hearing-faqs>.

Section 2: Legal Framework

WBE certification in New York State is governed by Article 15-A of the Executive Law and 5 NYCRR Part 144. The certification process is administered by Empire State Development's Division of Minority and Women's Business Development.

Key Certification Requirements

To qualify as a WBE, a business must demonstrate these key certification requirements:

- One or more women own at least 51% of the business (§ 144.2(a))
- The woman owner(s) have made a real and substantial capital contribution (§ 144.2(d))
- The woman owner(s) control the day-to-day operations and long-term decision-making (§ 144.2(b) and (c))
- The business is independent of firms not owned and controlled by women (§ 144.2(e))
- The woman owner(s) have technical competence in the core function of the business (§ 144.2(c)(2))

The burden of proof is on the applicant to demonstrate eligibility by clear and convincing evidence.

Legislative Background and Developments

Article 15-A was enacted in 1988 to promote equal opportunity for minority- and women-owned businesses in state contracting. The implementing regulations (5 NYCRR Part 144) have evolved to reflect heightened scrutiny of the substance of ownership and control rather than mere form.

In 2010 and 2014, amendments to the regulations emphasized:

- The need for independent and verifiable capital contributions
- Control over core business operations, not just administrative functions
- Limits on passive ownership or nominal roles

In *Scherzi Systems, LLC v. White*, 197 A.D.3d 1466 (3d Dep't 2021), the Appellate Division clarified that evidence presented during the hearing may be considered if it explains or clarifies materials previously submitted with the application, affirming the right of applicants to supplement the record during administrative review.

Section 3: Trends in WBE Certification Denials (2016-2025)

A. Increased Scrutiny on Control and Management

The Division now requires that the woman owner actively directs core business functions, not just administrative or HR tasks. If a male employee or previous owner still controls operations, the application is likely to be denied.

B. Emphasis on Technical Competence

Applicants in technical or licensed industries must demonstrate that the woman owner has the credentials, experience, or licensure to direct the firm's core work. Otherwise, control is not deemed genuine.

C. Greater Challenges for Family-Owned Transitions

Ownership transitions from husbands, fathers, or other family members require documentation of personal investment, assumption of control, and separation from legacy influence.

D. Rising Denial Rates

Denial rates have increased substantially. The Business Journal reported that in 2023, one in three MWBE applications was denied, compared to 10.7% in 2014.

E. Increasing Appeals and Legal Challenges

More applicants are requesting hearings or seeking Article 78 review. Some cases have led to reversals or remands, particularly where applicants clarified their roles at hearing.

F. Legislative Development

A 2024 bill introduced by Senator April Baskin proposes to extend the timeframe for requesting administrative hearings from 30 days to 60 days. The goal is to provide fairer access to applicants facing denial under complex circumstances.

Section 4: Capital Contribution as a Ground for Denial

A. Definition and Legal Standard

To meet the requirement of a real and substantial capital contribution under 5 NYCRR § 144.2(d), the woman applicant must show she has invested resources that reflect her ownership interest and expose her to risk in proportion to that interest.

Acceptable forms of contribution include:

- Cash deposits (supported by bank statements or canceled checks)
- Equipment or real property (with proof of value and transfer)
- Documented technical expertise, if clearly tied to business ownership and formally recognized in the equity structure

The Division considers whether the contribution:

- Was independently verifiable
- Originated from the woman's own assets (not marital or jointly held funds)
- Represents meaningful financial risk and value

The applicant must also demonstrate that she receives benefits – such as profit share or compensation – in line with her ownership percentage.

B. Common Issues Leading to Denial

- **Joint Marital Assets:** When the capital contribution comes from a joint checking or retirement account shared with a spouse, the Division requires clear evidence that the woman owner had independent access and authority over the funds. Without documentation of separate control, the contribution may be discounted or disregarded.
- **Gifts or Transfers Without Value:** If ownership is transferred without payment or documented consideration – especially from a husband, parent, or business partner – the Division may conclude that the contribution is symbolic and not substantial.
- **Inheritance Without Investment:** A woman who inherits a business but does not invest personal funds or assets, or assume financial risk, may not meet the contribution standard even if she owns 51% of the business.
- **Delayed or Post Hoc Contributions:** Contributions claimed after the business formation or after a relationship transfer are viewed with skepticism unless fully documented in the business's books and ownership records.
- **Unequal Compensation or Distributions:** If the woman owner receives significantly less compensation or profit share than her ownership stake would suggest, the Division may infer that she does not have a meaningful financial interest in the business.
- **Reliance on Unverified Expertise:** While expertise can count as a contribution, it must be documented (e.g., resumes, project history, client roles) and formally recognized in the business's equity structure.

C. Strategies for Applicants and Counsel

- **Document contributions with precision.** Provide bank records, canceled checks, equity schedules, and transfer documents to support any claim of cash, equipment, or property investment.
- **Separate personal and business funds early.** Avoid the appearance of commingling or post hoc transfers by establishing distinct accounts for business capitalization.
- **Avoid symbolic ownership.** Ensure that ownership is accompanied by financial risk and economic benefit. Equity stakes should align with profit sharing, compensation, and actual investment.
- **Value non-cash contributions.** If technical expertise is the basis for the capital contribution, prepare an independent valuation or detailed narrative supported by client work, licenses, or third-party attestations.
- **Use governing documents to reinforce ownership.** The operating agreement, shareholder agreement, or corporate bylaws should reflect the woman owner's financial contribution and percentage of control.

- **Anticipate scrutiny of family transfers.** If ownership is obtained from a spouse or family member, provide detailed documentation to show consideration, formal change in authority, and distinct financial interests.

D. Case Studies - Capital Contribution Denials

Bore Tech, LLC

- **Decision Date:** December 22, 2021
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(a)(1) and § 144.2(c)(2) - Capital contribution not proportionate to ownership; insufficient share in risks and profits
- **Key Facts:** Bore Tech's capital came largely from jointly held retirement accounts. Ms. Fenoff received significantly less in salary than her husband over time. The Division concluded her compensation and risk did not reflect majority ownership.
- **Key Takeaway:** Contributions from joint marital funds and unequal compensation may lead to denial unless proportionality and separate ownership can be documented.

CNC Construction, Inc.

- **Decision Date:** October 31, 2024
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(b)(2), (b)(5), (d)(1), and (e) - Multiple issues including capital contribution, board control, and independence
- **Key Facts:** The woman owner's contributions included a nominal buyout, gift of shares, and undocumented in-kind items. The transfer of ownership coincided with a certification push. Significant business ties existed with family-owned subcontractors.
- **Key Takeaway:** Capital contribution must be verifiable, proportional, and aligned with true operational independence.

S.C. Spencer Electric, Inc.

- **Decision Date:** March 31, 2022
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(a)(1), (a)(5), (b)(1), (b)(2), and (c)(2)
- **Key Facts:** The business was jointly owned by spouses. Capital came from a joint account, and bylaws gave the husband executive control. The woman owner was undercompensated and lacked operational authority.
- **Key Takeaway:** Shared funding, subordinate roles, and lack of governing authority create multiple grounds for denial.

PamTen, Inc.

- **Decision Date:** August 1, 2018
- **Denial Basis (Reversed):** § 144.2(a)(1) - Lack of capital contribution

- **Key Facts:** No cash was invested by either founder. The ALJ found the woman owner's extensive business management experience was a qualifying contribution.
- **Key Takeaway:** Non-cash contributions like expertise may suffice if well-documented and tied to the business's value.

Conxx NE, Inc.

- **Decision Date:** November 8, 2017
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(a)(1), (b)(1), (c)(2), and (a)(2)
- **Key Facts:** A loan from a related entity was later repaid, but not included in the initial application. Core operations were led by men in another state, and the owner lived remotely.
- **Key Takeaway:** Loan-based capital must be documented at the time of application. Ownership without active control or proximity may not meet standards.

Java Joe's Roasting Co., Inc.

- **Decision Date:** July 26, 2023
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(a)(1) and (b)(2)
- **Key Facts:** Shares were gifted by the husband shortly before applying for certification. Corporate documents did not show control by the woman owner.
- **Key Takeaway:** Gifting of ownership shortly before application, without capital or authority, suggests inauthentic restructuring for certification purposes.
- **Document contributions with precision.** Provide bank records, canceled checks, equity schedules, and transfer documents to support any claim of cash, equipment, or property investment.
- **Separate personal and business funds early.** Avoid the appearance of commingling or post hoc transfers by establishing distinct accounts for business capitalization.
- **Avoid symbolic ownership.** Ensure that ownership is accompanied by financial risk and economic benefit. Equity stakes should align with profit sharing, compensation, and actual investment.
- **Value non-cash contributions.** If technical expertise is the basis for the capital contribution, prepare an independent valuation or detailed narrative supported by client work, licenses, or third-party attestations.
- **Use governing documents to reinforce ownership.** The operating agreement, shareholder agreement, or corporate bylaws should reflect the woman owner's financial contribution and percentage of control.
- **Anticipate scrutiny of family transfers.** If ownership is obtained from a spouse or family member, provide detailed documentation to show consideration, formal change in authority, and distinct financial interests.

Section 5: Control and Management as a Ground for Denial

A. Definition and Legal Standard

To meet the requirements of 5 NYCRR § 144.2(b) and (c), the woman owner must not only hold the majority interest but must also have control over the business's day-to-day management and long-term strategic decisions. This includes both formal authority – such as holding the highest officer position and having final say in business matters – and functional authority – such as making strategic, financial, and operational decisions.

The Division looks for:

- Control reflected in governing documents (e.g., bylaws, shareholder or operating agreements)
- The woman's role in hiring, firing, bidding, purchasing, and managing contracts
- Oversight of personnel who deliver the company's primary services
- Evidence the woman is not restricted by a board or other stakeholders

The Division evaluates both the written structure and real-world operations.

B. Common Issues Leading to Denial

- The woman does not hold the highest officer position (e.g., President or CEO)
- A board can outvote the woman owner or override her authority
- A male partner or family member continues to direct operations
- The woman owner has limited time involvement or works elsewhere full-time
- Public records or filings contradict the claimed leadership structure

C. Strategies for Applicants and Counsel

- Confirm the woman owner's officer role is accurately reflected in filings and documents
- Eliminate decision-making authority retained by others in governance documents
- Clearly define operational supervision over technical staff
- Avoid inconsistencies in websites, licenses, or government records
- Be prepared to present detailed evidence of actual control if challenged

D. Case Studies – Control and Management Denials

Scherzi Systems, LLC

- **Decision Dates:** July 25, 2019 (upholding denial);
- **Reversal Date:** Scherzi Systems, LLC v. White, [197 A.D.3d 1466](#) (3d Dept 2021)
- **Final Order:** February 2, 2022 (reversing denial)
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(b) – Lack of control (initially upheld)

- **Key Facts:** The woman owner acquired majority shares from her husband. The Division denied the application, citing lack of control. The ALJ reversed, crediting testimony and documents showing she supervised staff and directed operations. The Division Director rejected the ALJ's findings. On Article 78 review, the court held that evidence presented at the hearing must be considered if it clarifies the existing record.
- **Key Takeaway:** This case underscores that hearing testimony may correct incomplete or unclear records. Applicants should submit strong initial documentation but also be ready to support control claims through testimony and clarifying evidence.

PamTen, Inc.

- **Decision Date:** August 1, 2018
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(b) – Reversed
- **Key Facts:** The Division initially denied certification, claiming the woman owner lacked a proportionate capital contribution and did not control the company. The ALJ reversed, finding that her experience and leadership in technical and project management supported actual control.
- **Key Takeaway:** Where documented leadership and experience exist, control may be demonstrated through consistent project oversight and direction.

Upstate Electrical, LLC

- **Decision Date:** August 30, 2018
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(b) – Lack of time commitment
- **Key Facts:** The woman owner worked full-time at an unrelated company over 100 miles away. No evidence of regular involvement in daily management was presented.
- **Key Takeaway:** Time investment and physical presence are crucial in establishing control. Control must be active, consistent, and verifiable.

Signs Now of Rochester, Inc.

- **Decision Date:** April 24, 2019
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(b)(2) – Franchise restrictions
- **Key Facts:** The franchise agreement imposed restrictions on pricing, branding, and operations. The woman owner could not alter core aspects of the business without franchisor approval.
- **Key Takeaway:** Franchise or licensing agreements that limit discretion may negate control, even if ownership is clear.

Section 6: Lack of Independence as a Ground for Denial

A. Definition and Legal Standard

Independence is a core requirement of WBE certification and is evaluated under 5 NYCRR § 144.2(e). The business must be independent from any non-woman-owned enterprise. Even when ownership and control are formally in place, the presence of outside influence – especially from family-run or male-owned companies – can lead to a denial.

To qualify as independent, the applicant must:

- Operate separately from any non-woman-owned entity
- Maintain its own facilities, equipment, and employees
- Have distinct financial, managerial, and legal structures

The Division reviews contracts, leases, websites, and tax filings to determine whether the business functions as an independent entity or as an extension of another company.

B. Common Issues Leading to Denial

- **Shared Resources:** Use of shared yard, warehouse, or office space with another company
- **Shared Equipment or Employees:** Cross-use of equipment or labor without arms-length agreements
- **Financial Dependence:** Loans or financial guarantees from another business not owned by a woman
- **Related Party Contracts:** Subcontracting or receiving work from a male-owned affiliate
- **Overlapping Leadership or Ownership:** Interconnected management or ownership structures

C. Strategies for Applicants and Counsel

- Prepare documentation to show that all facilities, equipment, employees, and finances are separate and under the woman owner's authority
- Avoid business models that rely heavily on referrals or subcontracting from related businesses
- Use formal leases, subcontractor agreements, and invoices to demonstrate market-rate transactions
- Clearly define the WBE's organizational structure, staffing, and client base, distinguishing it from any affiliates

D. Case Studies - Independence Denials

Versatile LLC

- **Decision Date:** July 10, 2023
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(e) - Lack of operational independence
- **Key Facts:** The woman owner was also involved in her husband's company, which operated in a related industry. The companies shared office space, phone lines, and insurance. Employees worked interchangeably across both businesses.
- **Key Takeaway:** Independence requires physical, operational, and managerial separation from any non-woman-owned enterprise.

Dale Workforce Solutions

- **Decision Date:** May 7, 2024
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(e) - Lack of operational and contractual independence
- **Key Facts:** The business relied on a single subcontractor to provide its core services and outsourced administrative functions to external vendors. The Division found the applicant lacked internal capacity to perform the work.
- **Key Takeaway:** A WBE must have the ability to perform its own core functions and manage its operations without relying on others.

The Big Deal Casino Academy, LLC

- **Decision Date:** December 17, 2024
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(e) - Lack of independence
- **Key Facts:** The applicant's business shared office space and infrastructure with another company also owned by the woman owner. The second company paid rent and provided administrative support. The ALJ found no separate infrastructure or operations.
- **Key Takeaway:** Even between two woman-owned entities, blurred lines between businesses may justify denial if the certified entity lacks a distinct and independent presence.

Section 7: Core Business Functions as a Ground for Denial

A. Definition and Legal Standard

Under 5 NYCRR § 144.2(c)(2), the woman owner must control the firm's essential operations, not just its financial or administrative functions. This means the woman must have the technical competence and actual authority to direct the company's primary business activities.

The Division evaluates:

- The woman owner's qualifications, licenses, or experience in the firm's core service area
- Whether she supervises technical staff or project execution
- Who makes decisions on pricing, project scope, and client deliverables

In regulated industries, the woman owner must hold any required licenses or show equivalent supervisory control over licensed professionals.

B. Common Issues Leading to Denial

- The woman owner is only responsible for payroll, HR, or office tasks
- Key technical staff report to a male employee or previous owner
- The woman lacks licenses needed for regulated services
- She works remotely or part-time and doesn't oversee operations directly
- The company's work is outsourced without documented oversight

C. Strategies for Applicants and Counsel

- Demonstrate the woman owner's industry-specific experience or training
- Include resumes, certifications, project roles, and client documentation
- Show that technical staff report directly to the woman owner
- If licensing is required, she must hold it or have clear authority over those who do
- Avoid appearances that others (especially prior male owners) continue to run the business

D. Case Studies – Core Business Function Denials

Certified Hood & Fire Co., Inc.

- **Decision Date:** February 22, 2024
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(c)(2) – Lack of operational control over critical functions
- **Key Facts:** The woman owner managed administrative functions but lacked experience in fire suppression system installation. Long-standing male employees supervised technicians.
- **Key Takeaway:** Experience in support functions is not enough. The owner must oversee or direct core technical work.

West Branch Engineering and Consulting, P.C.

- **Decision Date:** April 11, 2017
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(c)(2) – Lack of control over technical operations
- **Key Facts:** The woman owner had a background in marketing and finance but lacked estimating and project management experience. Her husband continued to oversee technical staff.

- **Key Takeaway:** A woman owner must lead the primary revenue-generating work of the business, not just its back office.

TCI Systems, Inc.

- **Decision Date:** November 27, 2023
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(c)(2) – Lack of technical direction
- **Key Facts:** The woman owner worked limited hours and had no background in security systems. Key male employees managed day-to-day operations.
- **Key Takeaway:** Without industry knowledge or direct oversight, control over core functions is not met.

J. McBain, Inc.

- **Decision Date:** February 3, 2025
- **Denial Basis:** § 144.2(c)(1)(i) – Lack of industry-specific competence related to licensure
- **Key Facts:** The woman owner lacked the electrician’s license required for installation of fire systems. The company relied on her husband’s licensure.
- **Key Takeaway:** Where licensure is legally required, the woman owner must hold it or show equivalent authority over licensed operations.

Section 8: Comparison Chart – WBE Certification Denial Grounds

Case Name	Date	Denial Ground	Key Facts	Key Takeaway
Bore Tech, LLC	12/22/2021	Capital Contribution	Joint assets; unequal salary; no documentation of individual risk	Joint funds and salary disparities may undermine contribution claims
CNC Construction, Inc.	10/31/2024	Capital Contribution	Undocumented ownership transfer; ties to related businesses	Symbolic contributions and family ties raise red flags
S.C. Spencer Electric, Inc.	3/31/2022	Capital/Control	Joint marital funds; husband as President; restricted bylaws	Operational roles and documentation must match claimed control
PamTen, Inc.	8/1/2018	Capital (Reversed)	No monetary investment; recognized expertise used to justify ownership	Documented expertise may count toward ownership
Conxx NE, Inc.	11/8/2017	Capital/Independence	Loan from related firm; out-of-state owner; shared control	Distance and financial overlap affect certification
Java Joe's Roasting Co., Inc.	7/26/2023	Capital Contribution	Gifted shares; husband retained authority; poor documentation	Gifting ownership without substance will not support certification
Scherzi Systems, LLC	7/25/19 2/2/22	Control (Reversed)	Hearing record showed woman directed technical work	Hearing testimony can clarify and strengthen control claims
PamTen, Inc.	8/1/2018	Control (Reversed)	Demonstrated experience and direction of operations	Leadership history may establish functional control
Upstate Electrical, LLC	8/30/18	Control	Owner worked full-time elsewhere; lacked presence	Time commitment is essential to showing control
Signs Now of Rochester	4/24/2019	Control/Independence	Franchise agreement limited discretion	Franchise rules may override paper ownership

Case Name	Date	Denial Ground	Key Facts	Key Takeaway
Certified Hood & Fire Co.	2/22/2024	Core Functions	Woman owner lacked technical experience; others led technical work	Admin duties are insufficient for core function control
West Branch Engineering, P.C.	4/11/2017	Core Functions	No estimating experience; husband directed technical operations	Owner must lead technical service delivery
TCI Systems, Inc.	11/27/2023	Core Functions	Limited hours; male staff directed projects	Time and technical knowledge are both needed for control Required licensure
J. McBain, Inc.	2/3/2025	Core Functions	Owner lacked license for electrical work	must be held or directed by the woman owner
Versatile LLC	7/10/2023	Independence	Shared space and insurance with husband's company	Independence must be structural and visible
Dale Workforce Solutions	5/7/2024	Independence	Relied on single subcontractor and third-party vendors	Applicant must directly manage and perform core work
The Big Deal Casino Academy	12/17/2024	Independence	Shared office and operations with affiliate owned by same woman	Even woman-owned affiliates must be clearly separate

RESOURCES

1. New York State MWBE Certification Information

- Empire State Development – MWBE Certification <https://esd.ny.gov/doing-business-ny/mwbe> *Official portal with guidance, eligibility criteria, application forms, and FAQs.*

2. MWBE Appeals and Recommended Orders

- MWBE Appeals and Final Orders Archive <https://esd.ny.gov/doing-business-ny/mwbe/mwbe-appeals#mwbe-appeals-decisions> *Database of ALJ Recommended Orders and ESD Final Decisions*

3. Regulations and Legal Framework

- 5 NYCRR Part 144 – MWBE Certification Regulations <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/MWBE-Regulations-120220.pdf> *Current certification regulations under which all decisions are analyzed.*
- New York Executive Law Article 15-A <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EXC/A15-A> *The foundational statute for MWBE programs in New York State.*

4. Case Law - Scherzi Systems, LLC v. White

Important appellate decision clarifying the admissibility of hearing evidence

- Initial Recommended Order – recommending reversal of denial <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/Scherzi-Recommended-Order.pdf> (July 25, 2019)
- Executive Director rejected recommendation and upheld denial, based, in part, on refusal to consider evidence not included in original application
- Scherzi Systems, LLC v. White, 197 A.D.3d 1466 (3d Dept 2021) – requiring reconsideration of all evidence presented
- Second Final Order – granting certification <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/Scherzi-Systems-LLC-Final-Order.pdf> (February 2, 2022)

5. Helpful Appeals Guide

Guide to Administrative Appeals of MWBE Certification Denials

<https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Final-MWBE-Denial-Hearing-FAQs-linked-updated-June-2024.pdf>.

6. 2024 Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Disparity Study

<https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/State-of-New-York-Empire-State-Development-2024-Disparity-Study.pdf>

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Patricia Mancabelli '96

Patti is the founder and owner of Her Corporate Counsel, powered by Mancabelli Law PLLC, a virtual law firm dedicated to serving women-owned businesses throughout New York State. She also recently launched a fractional general counsel service to support companies nationwide seeking accessible, ongoing legal guidance tailored to their unique business needs and growth objectives.

With over 25 years of experience practicing law, Patti's practice focuses on proactive risk management, commercial contracts and corporate governance. Her innovative approach emphasizes building deep, lasting client relationships through flat-fee models. Patti's clients consult with her regularly, without the constraints of hourly billing, and address potential issues before they become costly problems.

Patti's expertise includes navigating complex contractual landscapes, advising on corporate structures and agreements, and guiding clients through the intricacies of New York's WBE certification. Passionate about empowering women entrepreneurs, she regularly speaks and writes on topics related to business growth, risk management, and compliance strategies specifically tailored to WBEs.

A dedicated mentor for 20+ years, Patti actively engages with both seasoned and emerging professionals, providing guidance through structured mentoring programs and informal mentorship opportunities. She has a proven track record of fostering professional growth and development, helping mentees navigate career transitions, build leadership skills, and achieve personal and professional milestones.

In addition to her practice, Patti is actively involved in community and professional organizations, including her current role as President of the Buffalo Niagara Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners ("NAWBO"). She leverages her experience to mentor and support the next generation of women leaders, championing their growth and success.

Patti received her JD *magna cum laude* from the University at Buffalo School of Law where she was Head Note & Comment Editor and a published author on the *Buffalo Law Review*. She completed Tax and Finance Transaction Concentrations and was a student attorney in the Community Economic Development Clinic. She clerked for a Judge on the Arizona Court of Appeals, and practiced commercial litigation at a mid-size firm, Jackson White, in Mesa Arizona. Patti returned to Buffalo as a commercial litigator and appellate practitioner with Phillips Lytle until she opened her own boutique business law firm in 2013.

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