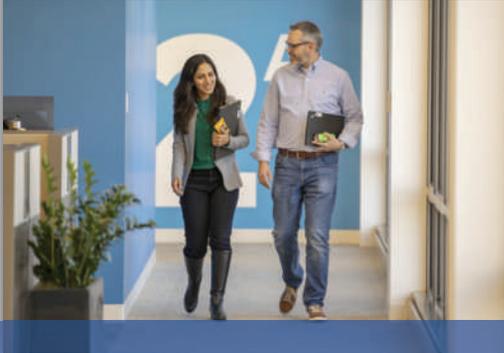


PepsiCo has mandated Unconscious Bias training for PepsiCo executives globally as part of our Racial Equality Journey commitments.



At PepsiCo, men and women are paid within 1% of each other in the 71 countries that represent more than 99 percent of our salaried employee population, and in the U.S., people of color and non-minorities are paid within 1%.



A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE WORLD FOR OUR PEOPLE, IN OUR BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS AND IN OUR COMMUNITIES



PepsiCo's Food for Good helps fight childhood hunger and advances food security by partnering with local food banks and nonprofits. The program has delivered more than 32 million meals to low-income U.S. families to date.



PepsiCo launched Dig In, a consumer-facing, multi-year platform with an aim to generate \$100 million in sales for Black-owned restaurants over the next five years.

PepsiCo is committed to creating a collaborative and inclusive space where everyone, regardless of what we look like, where we come from or who we love, has a voice.



PEPSICO



Tropicana



MBNTEXAS

MINORITY & MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS NEWS



Exclusive:

Toyota, Chime

partnership driving change
in local communities

SBA's Austin
Herbert: COVID-19
loan program
deadline looms

Mandy Price's
Kanarys taps rare
funding to bolster
workplace DEI

ENGINEERED TO A HIGHER
STANDARD—THE HUMAN STANDARD.

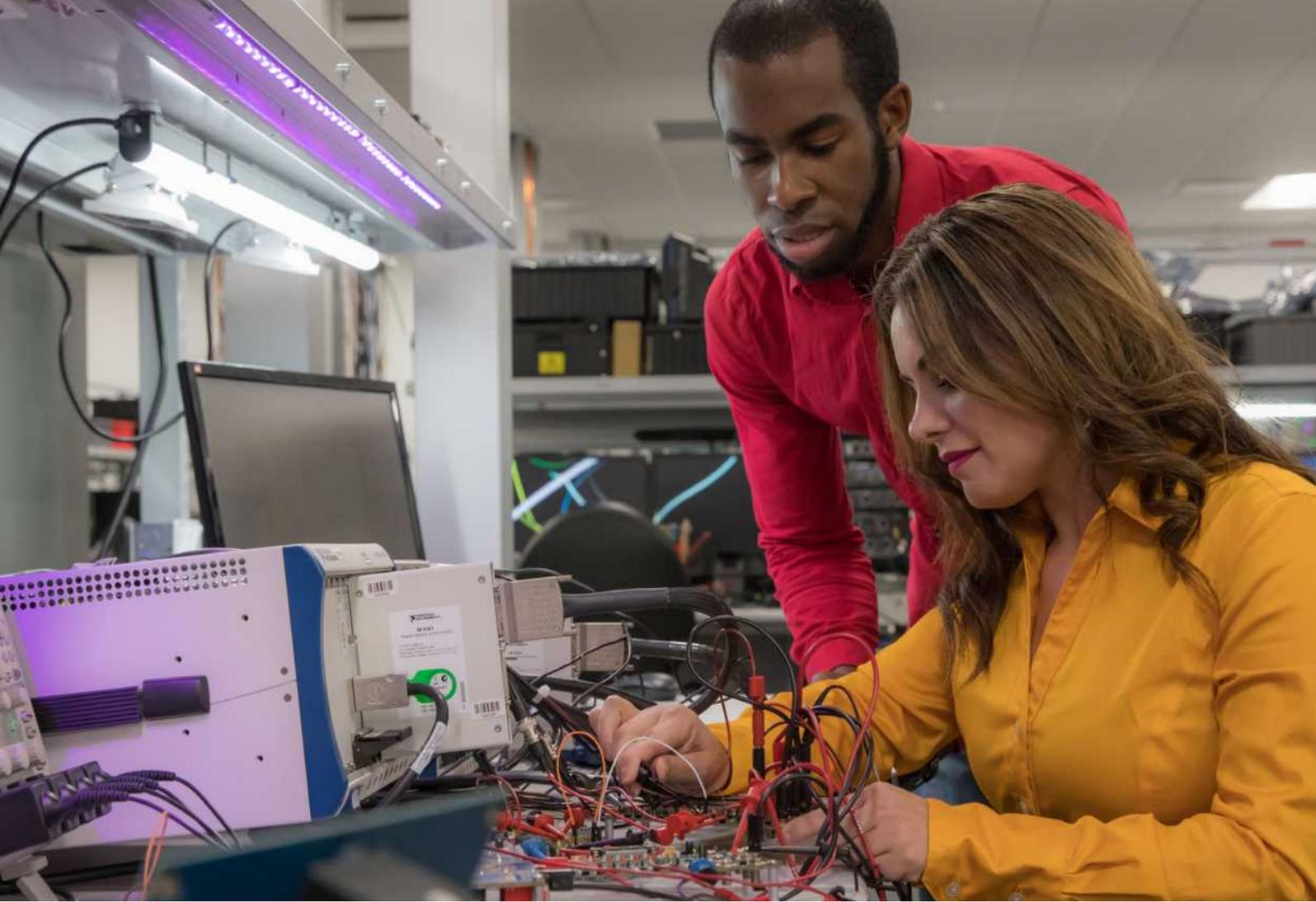
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MINORITY & MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS NEWS



Margo J. Posey,
president and CEO,
Dallas Fort Worth
Minority Supplier
Development Council

DFW MSDC's Margo J. Posey emphasizes need to continue developing parity in the supply chain

— page 24

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Ingrid Robinson,
president and
CEO, Houston
Minority Supplier
Development
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**HMSDC's Ingrid
Robinson sees
bright future
for MBEs in the
supply chain**

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Karen Box,
president and
CEO, Southwest
Minority Supplier
Development
Council



**SMSDC's Karen Box
sees need to help
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dfwmsdc.com



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◀ **Nicole Scarrella**
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Parkland Health &
Hospital System
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◀ **Leigh Ann Vernon**
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◀ **Darcel Webb**
UT Southwestern
Medical Center
utswmed.org



◀ **Heather Herndon Wright**
Vistra Corp.
vistracorp.com



MBE Advisors



◀ **Ronetta Briggs**
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LogistiCorp Group LLC
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◀ **Betty Manetta**
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argentassociates.com



◀ **Fred N. Moses**
Telecom Electric
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◀ **Gregg Ontiveros**
Group O Inc.
groupo.com



◀ **Terri Quinton**
ADP LLC
adp-llc.com



◀ **Roderick Rickman**
Rickman Enterprise
Group LLC
[rickman
enterprise.com](http://rickman
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◀ **Tom Ren**
Global XLR
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◀ **Nina Vaca**
Pinnacle Group
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MBN TEXAS

MINORITY & MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS NEWS

Our Mission: Promote the value of minority business development and recognize corporate supplier diversity success.

Founder, Chairman and Publisher

Don McKneely
don@mbnusa.biz

General Manager

Kristin Schneider
kristin@wegp.biz

Editorial Director

Stephanie Anderson Forest
stephanie@mbnusa.biz

Operations Manager

Kristin Gabaldon
kristin@bngusa.biz

Distribution Manager

Wendy Teel
wendy@bngusa.biz

Designer

Nancy Kekich

Contributors

- Caryn Berardi
 - Brenda Beveridge
 - DeAnn Daley Holcomb
 - Genny Hom-Franzen
 - Georgeann Ikuma
 - Melissa Lowery
 - Michele Majors Brown
 - Tonya McMurray
 - Terri Quinton
 - Mary Reed
 - Meredith Sell
 - Monica Stavish Skaggs
 - Suzanne B. Squyres
 - Robert Stanton
- Photographers**
- Easley Blessed Photography
 - Shellee Fisher Photography and Design
 - Rogers Wm. Foster
 - Reginald Loftin
 - Wayne Mebane
 - Gerald Peart
 - Photogenic Services
 - Powell Creative Services
 - Erika Therwhanger
 - Twice Media Productions LLC

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Apply for EIDL loans by Dec. 31

SBA's Herbert Austin provides insight on COVID-19 loan program

Herbert Austin is the district director for the U. S. Small Business Administration Dallas/Fort Worth office, covering 72 counties of north, central and east Texas.

As director, he is responsible for the management and delivery of SBA programs and services, which includes oversight of SBA resources – Small Business Development Centers and SCORE Chapters. [The SCORE Association “Counselors to America’s Small Business” is a nonprofit association comprised of 13,000-plus volunteer business counselors throughout the United States and its territories].

The Dallas/Fort Worth district office works with about 200 participating lenders to provide access to capital to the small business community. The district covers 22% of the land area of Texas, 36.3% of the population and an estimated 800,000 small businesses.

Austin is a 32-year SBA veteran who has been in the Dallas/Fort Worth office since 2008.

Here, he gives an update on fund availability for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan. EIDL is federal small business loan program that supports small businesses’ recovery from the COVID-19 disaster’s economic impacts by providing accessible and borrower-friendly capital.

SBA is authorized to make COVID EIDL loans through Dec. 31, 2021, or when funds are exhausted, whichever occurs sooner.

Q: *What are the minimum and maximum loan dollar amounts?*

A: There is no minimum loan amount, but the maximum is \$2 million. SBA began approving loans greater than \$500,000 in October.

Q: *How successful has SBA been at getting EIDL loan funds to small businesses?*

A: If you qualify, it is not so difficult to get funded. Of course, there is a process, and that can take some time from application approval to funds in your account. To date,

nearly 4 million applications have been approved and funded.

Q: *How successful have minority businesses been at getting funding approval?*

A: If you meet the requirements, your application will be looked at the same way as others, whether you are a minority, veteran, woman or Anglo. We have a serious credit problem in our communities and, to qualify, you need to meet first the credit requirement: a 570 FICO score or more. Many minority firms get denied because of their FICO scores. However, if they can overcome this, they can request a reconsideration.

Q: *How receptive has the small and minority/women business communities been at filing EIDL applications?*

A: Many folks just do not trust government and, as a result, do not bother applying. Some did not even apply for PPP [The Paycheck Protection Program], a forgiveness loan program where credit is not pulled. [PPP ended in May 2021].

Q: *What specifically can the EIDL funds be used for?*

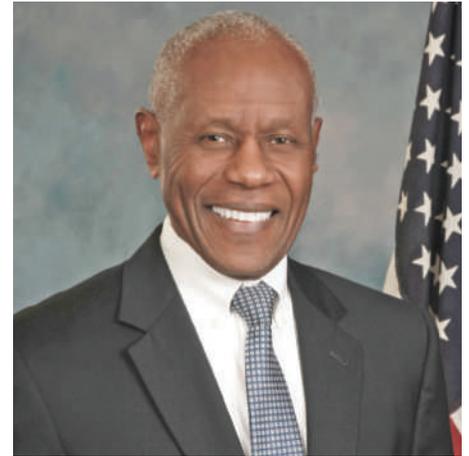
A: Funds can be used to meet normal operating expenses and working capital, prepay or pay commercial debt and make payments on federal business debt, rent, cost of goods sold and payroll.

Q: *What is the best way to apply for the EIDL funding?*

A: There is only one way. Go to the portal at <https://covid19relief.sba.gov/#>.

Q: *If funds are still available, is there a deadline for making an application?*

A: There are lots of funds still available. The deadline to apply is Dec. 31, 2021. SBA will continue to process loans that are in house by Dec. 31. ■



■ Herbert Austin, district director, U. S. Small Business Administration Dallas/Fort Worth office



There are lots of funds still available. SBA will continue to process loans that are in house by Dec. 31.

— Herbert Austin

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EIDL LOANS, VISIT SBA.GOV/FUNDING-PROGRAMS/LOANS/COVID-19-RELIEF-OPTIONS/EIDL/COVID-19-EIDL.

➔ TO APPLY FOR AN EIDL LOAN, VISIT [HTTPS://COVID19RELIEF.SBA.GOV/#](https://COVID19RELIEF.SBA.GOV/#).



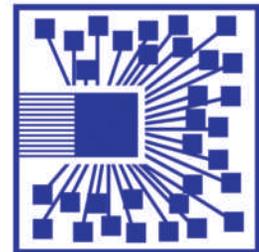
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Lending a helping hand

Facebook offers easier ways for businesses to gain access to capital

Facebook Inc. recently launched its 2021 Global State of Small Business report, which showed that despite falling closure rates, businesses are still struggling financially when it comes to paying down loans, debt, bills, rent and more.

In fact, the report revealed that 60% of small businesses are having some form of difficulty in paying business-related expenses, and access to capital and liquidity are crucial lifelines to their ongoing success.

Jason Trimiew, director of global supplier diversity at Facebook, said the company has spent time talking to small businesses across the country to understand their needs, and it remains committed to helping them navigate and recover from the pandemic.

To help get there, the social media giant recently introduced two new ways for diverse businesses to access capital more easily: the Facebook Invoice Fast Track program, which lets eligible small-to-medium businesses apply for Facebook to buy their invoices for immediate cash flow, and a new small business funding resource that connects small business owners with responsible lenders, relevant communities and information to help scale or manage their businesses. Learn more about these programs below.

FACEBOOK INVOICE FAST TRACK

Following a successful pilot with Facebook diverse suppliers, the company has expanded the Facebook Invoice Fast Track program to tens of thousands of companies owned by minorities, women, veterans, LGBTQ and those with disabilities. For a fixed fee, eligible businesses can get cash immediately for the goods and services they've invoiced their customers for but would otherwise have to wait months to get paid — time and capital they can now use to invest in the recovery and growth of their companies. Facebook will fund up to \$100 million in invoices on an ongoing basis and are operating the program in partnership with Supplier Success LLC and CrowdZ. (To learn more about Supplier Success, visit



https://mbnusa.biz/detail/supplier-success-helps-facebook-launch-mbe-focused-receivables-program?show_comment=1).

“We know how important working capital is to SMBs, and this is especially true when they are due money from their customers for work that they’ve completed,” said Jason Trimiew, director of global supplier diversity at Facebook. “Getting that cash today instead of months later can be the difference-maker for keeping employees or suppliers paid or investing in growth opportunities.”

The company is expanding the program in partnership with some of the leading business development and advocacy organizations supporting diverse entrepreneurs and communities, including the National Minority Supplier Development Council Inc. Women’s Business Enterprise National Council, National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, National Veterans Business Development Council, Disability:IN and US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce.

Small businesses like Wright Stuff Chics, Quester, Yardstick Management, SupplyHive and Veear Projects have already participated in the pilot program and have reported

that the Facebook Invoice Fast Track has helped them do everything from keep their businesses open to supporting their growth.

“When you’re an entrepreneur and you have a passion for what you do, yet you don’t have the working capital to do that, it ends up causing so many levels of stress,” said Lisa Dunnigan, co-founder of The Wright Stuff Chics, a Georgia-based business creates swag for educators. “We’ve been able to keep our staff members on with this program, and we’ve also been able to really keep our doors open.”

SMALL BUSINESS FUNDING RESOURCE

As part of its efforts to help SMBs access resources and the support they need to thrive, we launched a new experience on Facebook launched that connects small businesses owners with grant and loan opportunities, educational business resources and thriving SMB groups.

“Facebook’s initial funding partners included in this experience are mission-driven organizations focused on providing resources to owners from underserved communities that often face systemic barriers that limit



their access to capital. The inaugural set of partners include Community Reinvestment Fund, Southern Opportunity and Resilience Fund, California Rebuilding Fund, California Community Foundation, St. Louis Community Foundation, Greater Washington Community Foundation, The San Francisco Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust and the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.

“The pandemic brought to light the gaps

in access to funding that have always existed for underrepresented business owners. We wanted to make a commitment to building tools that made information and inclusive funding partners easy to find and understand,” said Ronnie Cameron, product manager, social impact at Facebook. “We’ve been able to engage with some amazing organizations like the Community Reinvestment Fund, in order to connect business owners to the right sources of funding.” ■

- ➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT FACEBOOK INVOICE FAST TRACK, VISIT [FACEBOOK.COM/BUSINESS/INVOICE-FAST-TRACK](https://www.facebook.com/business/invoice-fast-track).
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FACEBOOK’S SURVEY OF SMALL BUSINESSES SHOWS MANY STILL STRUGGLING

Facebook Inc. recently launched its “2021 Global State of Small Business,” report. It offers insights from a survey in July 2021 and August 2021 of more than 35,000 small-business leaders across 30 countries and territories.

Some of the key findings:

- There are signs that a global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic may be underway. Vaccination programs and the easing of restrictions have provided causes for hope for many after an unprecedented health crisis and economic shock. However, many countries face new or ongoing waves of COVID-19 and other variants.
- Small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), in particular, continue to face many unique challenges. But there are also some bright spots.
- The proportion of SMBs reporting higher sales in the past 30 days compared to a year ago has increased consistently, from 16% in May 2020 to 28% in July 2021. However, a majority (52%) continue to report lower sales.

- In the United States, closure rates fell to 16%, and only 34% of SMBs reported lower sales than a year ago.
- Hispanic-led SMBs in the U.S. had the highest rate of closures at 24%, followed by Black-led SMBs at 22%.
- Globally, about 20% of women-led SMBs reported being closed, compared to 16% of men-led SMBs.
- Women-led SMBs were less likely than men-led SMBs to report a drop in employment because of the pandemic, with 33% reporting a reduction compared to 36% for men-led SMBs.
- Lack of demand and cash flow continue to be the most reported challenges, with 35% and 33% of respondents citing these as concerns, respectively.
- An increasing share of SMBs are using digital tools, with 88% indicating they were doing so compared to 81% at the start of 2021.
- Over a fifth of SMBs indicated that they expected the final three months of 2021 to represent the majority of their



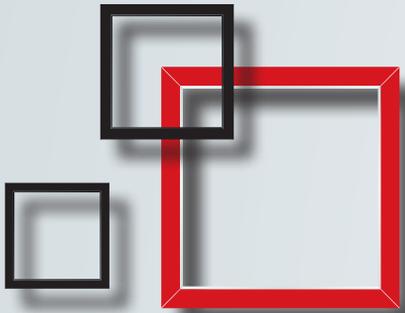
sales for the year. However, only 13% of SMBs indicated that they would take on temporary holiday workers.

- The ability of SMBs to rebound will be crucial in limiting the long-term effects of the pandemic.

To read the entire Global State of Small Business report, visit [dataforgood.com](https://www.dataforgood.com). [facebook.com/dfg/resources/sept-2021-global-state-of-small-business-report](https://www.facebook.com/dfg/resources/sept-2021-global-state-of-small-business-report).



Mark Wilson,
president and
CEO, Chime
Solutions Inc.



In the win-win deal, Chime walked away with an initial three-year business outsourcing services deal with Toyota, while the automaker continues to address many of its corporate objectives, including bringing another diverse supplier into its formidable supply chain.

Checking all the boxes

Toyota, Chime Solutions driving change in local communities

BY M.V. GREENE



From the very start, the vibe between Toyota and Chime Solutions Inc. seemed to check all the boxes. Toyota was the giant automaker with a demonstrated commitment to supply-chain diversity. Chime was the upstart diverse supplier seeking to expand its footprint. The budding partnership met key business and operational objectives of both sides. Also, job creation and community investment were two desired outcomes.

Through patience, openness and sustained engagement, Toyota and Chime found common ground in a collaboration that is a model for forward-thinking corporate supplier diversity activity that optimizes the business case for procurement diversity spend.

In the win-win deal, Chime walked away with an initial three-year business outsourcing services deal with Toyota, while the automaker continues to address many of its corporate objectives, including bringing another diverse supplier into its formidable supply chain.

“Our approach has been to recognize that there are some really mutually beneficial opportunities in working with diverse suppliers,” said Chris Nielsen, executive vice president of product support and chief quality officer, Toyota.

A NEW VIEW

As a leading global automotive and technology giant, Toyota hardly needs an introduction. The Japan-based company has a broad footprint in the United States and established its new North American headquarters in Plano, Texas — a Dallas suburb — in 2017.

Toyota has long been a proponent of corporate supplier diversity, as noted by its annual sponsorship of the Toyota Opportunity Exchange for diverse suppliers, its board-level participation in the National Minority Supplier Development Council Inc. and its status as a member company of

the Billion Dollar Roundtable Inc. In BDR, for instance, Toyota is one of 28 major corporations that signify their bonafides in supplier diversity through annual spend commitments of \$1 billion or more with Tier I diverse suppliers.

Toyota and like-minded corporate organizations view supplier diversity from a lens of competitiveness, strategic advantage, innovation and customer and community engagement, rather than as a benevolent exercise that early on characterized the practice.

“First and foremost, diverse suppliers that have been successful in gaining business with Toyota know firsthand that our expectations in terms of performance and capability are exactly the same for them as they are for any supplier,” Nielsen said.

CHIMING IN

Chime was founded in 2016 in Morrow, Georgia, near Atlanta, by entrepreneur Mark Wilson, its president and CEO. He has been intentional in ensuring that Chime is positioned as a supplier that can perform. The company provides business call center solutions designed to adapt to the individual needs of its clients — whether to reduce costs, increase revenue or improve customer contact.

Chime’s deal to support Toyota’s Brand Engagement Center business unit in Dallas for Tier I call center services commenced Feb. 1, 2021, and runs through Jan. 31, 2024.

Wilson is unabashed in articulating what he is trying to accomplish for Chime.

“I try to have our company out there to where we are fairly known, and we get to talk to all of [the potential clients] that are out there,” he said. In addition to the automotive sector, Chime competes in the areas of health care, financial services and telecommunications.

That Chime received an opportunity as a certified diverse



“First and foremost, diverse suppliers that have been successful in gaining business with Toyota know firsthand that our expectations, in terms of performance and capability, are exactly the same for them as they are for any supplier,”

— **Chris Nielsen**, executive vice president, product support, chief quality officer, Toyota

supplier to compete for and win Toyota business was hardly a fait accompli. Bonnie Clinton, Toyota vice president and chief procurement officer, indirect procurement shared services, said diligence and hard work were required by both sides to create the contract match.

She said Toyota carefully vets all potential supplier partnerships, but it doesn't stop there. It also values suppliers that can align long term with the company's business culture and objectives, she said.

“Long-term relationships are established through getting to know each other and through mutual trust,” Clinton said.

Wilson said he was determined to show Toyota procurement executives that Chime would fit the bill during more than three years of interactions before signatures on paper would signify a deal. Chime withstood Toyota's vetting process that included meetings, presentations, backgrounding, site visits and negotiations.

Clinton praised Chime for following through and showing Toyota that an opportunity existed to create that mutually beneficial relationship.

“We initially didn't know if there would be a fit, but everybody

stayed in touch. At the end of the day, the right opportunity presented itself,” she said. “A lot of it is around timing, and that can be very challenging. They were prepared and ready when the opportunity came about. They did not give up.”

SERVING THE UNDERSERVED

In beating the bushes to get the word out about Chime, Wilson had a proverbial ace up his sleeve — a core value of the company that would align with the objectives of potential clients. As a diverse supplier, Chime seeks to place its call center operations largely in minority communities where unemployment is high, and the need is urgent for community investment and development.

Since its founding, Chime has established call center operations serving clients in typically depressed areas of Atlanta, Georgia; Dallas, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Baltimore, Maryland, where the majority of its 2,500 employees are African American single women. In creating family-friendly work environments, Chime offers inducements to its associates, such as on-premises child care and transportation assistance, as well as free classes on repairing credit, buying homes and becoming entrepreneurs.

“A lot of it is around timing, and that can be very challenging. [Chime was] prepared and ready when the opportunity came about. They did not give up.”

— **Bonnie Clinton**, vice president and chief procurement officer, indirect procurement shared services, Toyota



A large circular graphic containing a white five-pointed star is superimposed over a photograph of the Dallas skyline at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the buildings. An American flag is visible on a tall pole in the upper right corner of the circular frame.

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We are committed to developing, maintaining, and enhancing participation by minority-owned and women-owned business enterprises in all phases of Dallas College's procurement processes.



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“We kind of looked at each other and said, ‘We want to be a part of this.’ It just resonated with us.”

— **Joe Mossinger**, senior manager, strategic sourcing, Toyota

Chime’s approach clearly caught the keen eye of Toyota as it began to establish new corporate citizenry in the Dallas/Fort Worth area alongside other Fortune 500 companies like AT&T, FedEx, ExxonMobil, J.C.Penney, American Airlines and Frito-Lay North America.

Nielsen said Toyota learned of Chime through association with the Dallas Regional Chamber after relocating its headquarters to Plano from Torrance, California. One of the chamber’s goals was to increase economic activity in the depressed southern Dallas area. He said Toyota was happy to join such an effort as a key Toyota value is creating economic opportunity in areas where it has operations.

He said the chamber’s president introduced him to a property developer in southern Dallas who told him about Wilson and Chime, which had located operations to a mall in the area. Nielsen said he met with Wilson and was impressed with his vision for community development and referred him to Clinton for possible procurement opportunities with Toyota.

Joe Mossinger, senior manager, strategic sourcing, and member of Toyota’s procurement team, called the experience “eye-opening” when the team visited the mall to see Chime’s operations.

“We kind of looked at each other and said, ‘We want to be a part of this.’ It just resonated with us,” he said.

Based on Toyota’s current forecast, Chime will be employing 60 or more full-time employees by January 2022.

For his part, Wilson couldn’t be more thrilled with Chime’s partnership with Toyota. He described the collaboration as being in its infancy, with the opportunity for increased engagement going forward.

“They could see tangibly that the work they are providing us to perform was being serviced by people from the community. It was very visible for them to see and understand that we are putting people to work by virtue of the work they are providing our company,” he said. “All of these companies with supplier diversity initiatives are really supporting the diverse constituencies of those companies.” ■

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TOYOTA’S SUPPLIER DIVERSITY PROGRAM, VISIT ONETOYOTASUPPLIERDIVERSITY.COM.

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CHIME SOLUTIONS, VISIT CHIMESOLUTIONS.COM.

“They could see tangibly that the work they are providing us to perform was being serviced by people from the community. It was very visible for them to see and understand that we are putting people to work by virtue of the work they are providing our company.”

— **Mark Wilson**, president and CEO, Chime Solutions Inc.



Fluor Supplier Diversity Program

Connecting for Opportunities



Fluor is committed to excellence in supplier diversity. As a global company, Fluor operates across highly diverse markets that are best served by correspondingly diverse resources, including suppliers and subcontractors.

Visit us at www.fluorprocurement.com for a list of the products and services that Fluor buys and create your company profile.

FLUOR[®]

Margo J. Posey discusses lessons learned in 2021 and outlook for 2022

“When MBEs are provided the opportunity to perform on large or small contracts, they surpass mainstream expectations and results. We will continue to voice that message and encourage increasingly mainstream businesses to understand the value and impact of minority business inclusion on our communities and our economy.”

— Margo J. Posey

President and CEO
Dallas Fort Worth Minority Supplier
Development Council



Q: *How would you describe 2021 versus 2020 for your organization and its MBEs?*

A: DFW MSDC learned to navigate the virtual world in 2020. We continue to seek opportunities to bring value to our stakeholders. We provided webinar sessions that attracted over 4,000 attendees in the current web-fatigued environment. We addressed business issues that were significant and valued by minority-owned businesses as well as Buying Entity stakeholders.

We continually looked for opportunities to help our Buying Entities and MBEs connect even in the new now.

Q: *What were the Council's major accomplishments in 2021?*

A: • DFW MSDC commissioned *supplier.io* to provide an Economic Impact study that is included as part of the 2020 annual report.

- We hosted the DFW MSDC Hard Hat Construction Expo LIVE to over 500 eager and anxious participants.
- ACCESS 2021 Business Expo introduced industry-focused seminars with senior-level speakers discussing opportunities in marketing/advertising, management consulting, public sector bonding projects and more. In addition, the programming included two [chief procurement officer] plenary sessions. The virtual expo provided an expanded look at business opportunities outside the usual supply chain focus.
- The Council continued to conduct virtual sessions with topics including disruption in the supply chain, cyber security, industry 4.0, social media, and “How to do Business” sessions with our stakeholders.
- 25 hardware/software relief awards of \$4,000 each to DFW MSDC certified minority-owned businesses.

Q: *What were the biggest challenges faced by your MBEs this year, and how did the Council help them meet these?*

A: Most MBEs will tell you “staying afloat” was — and is — the biggest challenge facing them. Those that had not yet had the chance to build relationships in person found the environment difficult to grow their business. The Council was successful in winning grants designed to help MBEs navigate the NEW NORMAL, including work-from-home and back-into-the-office support sessions, financing opportunities and grants, hardware and software grant relief, and navigating those organizations that had opportunities.

Q: *What do you see as the biggest opportunities for MBEs in 2021?*

A: Business is operating in an unfamiliar environment. This provides challenges but



DIVERSITY: Together the extraordinary array of colors make up a masterpiece.



also opportunities as well. Health care, supply chain logistics, manufacturing, technology, SMART technology, construction, eCommerce, etc., are all areas where businesses can have an impact as we all look for new ways to navigate. Those that can adjust, innovate, swivel to newer areas of emphasis with products and solutions will have an advantage going forward.

Q: *What are the Council's major goals for 2022?*

A: Our board of directors are planning a January retreat to help establish the future goals and objectives of the Council. In 2022, we will continue to advocate for increased utilization (not just opportunities) of minority-owned businesses and champion utilization that is a win-win for both MBEs and Buying Entity partners, in terms of sustainability and profit.

Additionally, we will emphasize how to return to in-person activities safely and where warranted. The Council is most effective at its mission of facilitating business connections between our Buying Entity partners and certified minority-owned business enterprises when we can use the best of in-person and virtual platforms to make connections.

Q: *What is your outlook for MBEs for 2022?*

A: Those MBEs that have swiveled and survived thus far in the current environment have learned how to survive. Their next challenge is continued growth and sustainability.

We hope that becomes easier in 2022, but the influences of discord, misinformation and divide will continue to make minority business utilization a challenge. Those that can enter new areas, receive funding for new directions and/or remain thought leaders in their industry will see the most growth and success.

Q: *What's your vision for the future of minority business development and supplier diversity?*

A: We would hope that eventually the need to distinguish between a diverse/minority supplier and a mainstream supplier would become less visible. However, the history, thus far, suggests that there will still need to be emphasis on developing parity in the supply chain for years to come unless we take a more targeted approach.

When MBEs are provided the opportunity to perform on large or small contracts, they surpass mainstream expectations and results. We will continue to voice that message and encourage increasingly mainstream businesses to understand the value and impact of minority business inclusion on our communities and our economy. ■

 TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DFW MSDC,
VISIT DFWMSDC.COM.



Dallas Fort Worth
Minority Supplier
Development Council

MBN Texas is honored to deliver the best in supplier diversity and inclusion to the nation. We are the No. 1 award-winning magazine and website focused on celebrating the strategies and successes in the minority business development and supply chain diversity arenas. We pride ourselves in *telling your story* because we understand that minority-owned businesses are vital to the economic success of our future.

MBN TEXAS
MINORITY & MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS NEWS

www.mbn-texas.biz • digital.mbn-texas.biz

By the numbers

Certified MBEs
(year-to-date)

1,093

Economic impact of
certified MBE members**

**\$12.9
billion**

Jobs supported
by your MBEs**

76,900

1,832

Construction bid
opportunities sourced

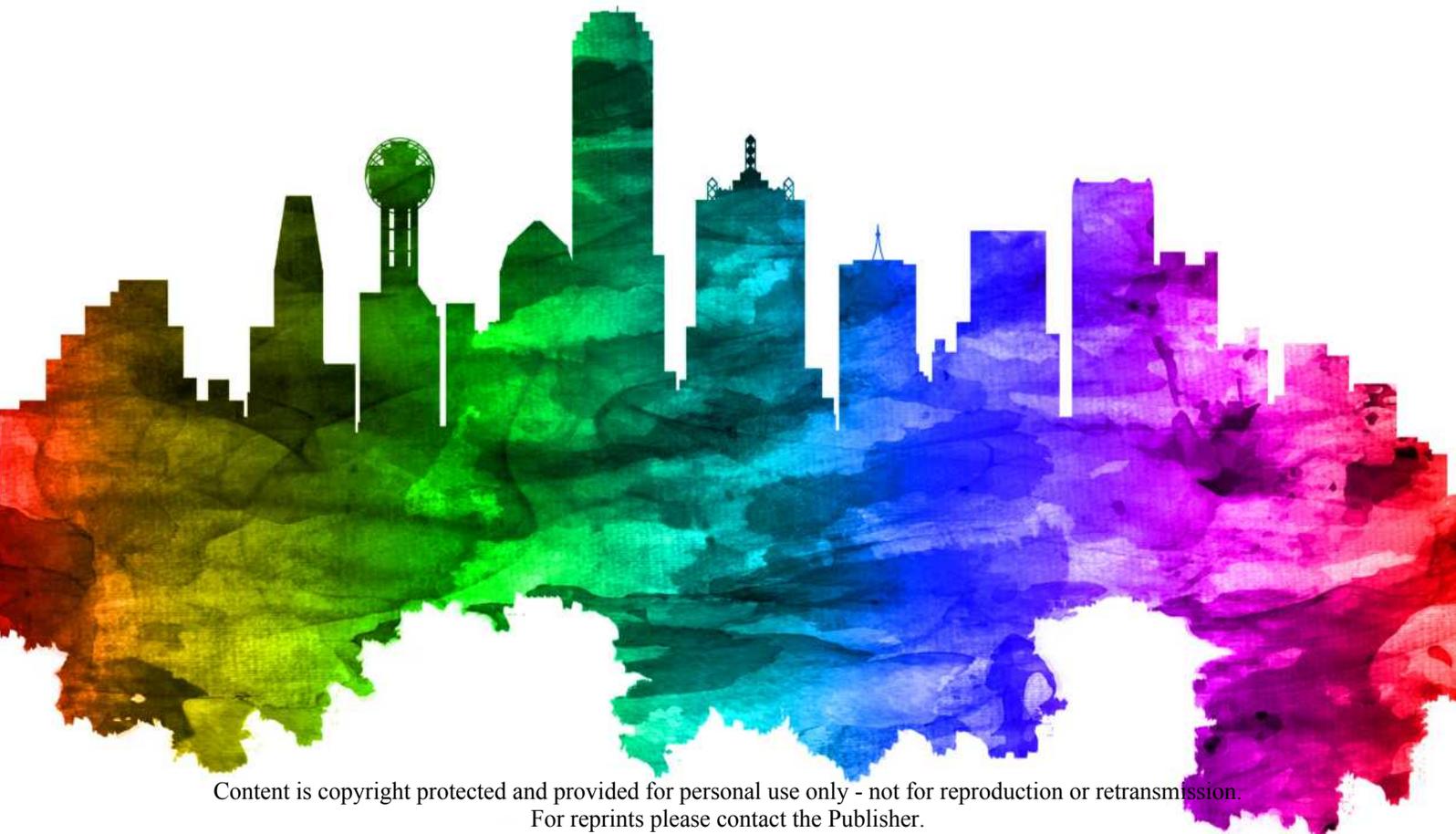
988

Construction MBE pre-bid
conference alerts sourced

217

Architectural/engineering
design/building services
opportunities sourced

** 2020 ANNUAL REPORT
SOURCE: DFW MSDC



BNSF Railway

*Driving Diversity
Delivering Value*



BNSF Railway is one of the leading transportation companies in North America. We connect American consumers and communities with the global marketplace. We seek safe and reliable goods and services from diverse-owned businesses that are innovative, collaborative and strategic supply partners.

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www.bnsf.com/suppliers/diverse-business-enterprise

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BNSF
RAILWAY



DFW MSDC President and CEO Margo J. Posey (center) is joined by Council Chair Bonnie Clinton (left), vice president and CPO, indirect procurement shared services, Toyota Motor North America Inc.; and Latisha Brandon, senior director, diversity, equity and inclusion, The Container Store.



2021 E Awards

AT&T named Corporation of the Year

The Dallas Fort Worth Minority Supplier Diversity Council recently held its E Awards Gala, recognizing **AT&T Inc.** as the **CORPORATION OF THE YEAR** and the **North Texas Tollway Authority** as the **PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCY OF THE YEAR** as part of the overall ceremony.

To win an award is no small feat. Both winning organizations demonstrated leadership and excellent results in the utilization of North Texas certified ethnic minority-owned businesses.

The E Awards Gala champions supplier diversity initiatives, minority business growth and development, minority business

inclusion and the positive impact created upon the North Texas economy and community. The program demonstrates the value of minority-owned businesses in providing solutions, exceeding expectations, and consistently working to improve and strive for excellence while working in concert with DFW MSDC Buying Entity members.

“Now more than ever, we celebrate the resilience of companies and organizations for persevering and building a legacy of inclusion,” said Margo J. Posey, president and CEO of DFW MSDC. “As one anonymous contributor has said, ‘Excellence is never an accident it is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, skillful execution and the vision to see obstacles as opportunities.’”

“The 2021 DFW MSDC E Awards acknowledge outstanding corporations, public sector agencies, minority business enterprises and individuals that exceed expectations and deliver on the mission of increasing minority business utilization in our economy,” she added.

Awards for corporations and public sector agencies were judged by minority business enterprise leaders. These leaders evaluated the submissions based on supplier diversity initiatives, the success of innovative purchasing best practices, development and growth of MBEs, and a commitment to the overall mission of the Council. Corporate and public sector agency representatives judged the MBE submissions based on their business growth, innovative business solutions, operational excellence, utilization of other MBEs and community involvement.

OTHER AWARDEES AT THE VIRTUAL BLACK-TIE EVENT WERE:

- **Class 4 Supplier of the Year** (gross revenues exceeding \$50 million):
Themesoft Inc.
- **Class 3 Supplier of the Year** (gross revenues between \$10 million and \$50 million): **Alliance Geotechnical Group Inc.**
- **Class 2 Supplier of the Year** (gross revenues between \$1 million and \$10 million): **Ruby Media Inc., dba DHD Films**
- **Class 1 Supplier of the Year** (gross revenues less than \$1 million):
Laguna Media Group LLC
- **Executive Champion of the Year:**
Annie Partee, Dallas Independent School District

- **Supply Chain Professional of the Year:**
Jenny Dyer, Toyota Motor North America Inc.
- **Supplier Diversity Professional of the Year:** **Greg Obar**, UNT System HUB Program
- **Service Leadership of the Year:**
Mary Gano, Vistra Corp.

Other awards presented during the event included **MEGA AWARDS**. These awards highlighted contracts between Buying Entity members and certified MBEs worth a minimum of \$25 million annually. Both **AT&T** and **PepsiCo Inc.** were recognized for their success in this area. MEGA Awards help dispel the myth that MBEs can only successfully manage small contracts and demonstrate the ability of MBEs to successfully perform on large contracts.

In addition, the Council recognized 26 Buying Entity members as part of the BUY THOSE THAT BUY US™ initiative. Honorees completed a scorecard of best practices and provided numerical results related to minority business inclusion program.

The initiative, celebrating its 13-year anniversary, delivers an important message of encouraging everyone to buy from those that support minority business inclusion and the goals and objectives we say we want to achieve in our community. Whether you are making a personal or business purchase, think BUY THOSE THAT BUY US™.

Despite the challenging business environment, DFW MSDC continues to champion the best of the best in minority business inclusion and advocate for others to join our efforts to fulfill the DFW MSDC mission of connecting certified minority-owned businesses with Buying Entity Members to deliver minority business inclusion in our supply chains.

From an initial spend of \$1 million with minority businesses in 1973, the Council has grown to verified spend with certified ethnic minority businesses headquartered in North Texas to a reported \$6.7 billion. This represents 889 DFW MSDC certified minority-owned businesses headquartered in North Texas. This equates to \$12.9 billion in economic activity including \$4.4 billion in wages and 76,900 direct and indirect jobs supported by minority businesses.

The Council continues to focus on building a better community for us all through minority business inclusion. DFW MSDC congratulates all the nominees and the distinguished winners of the 2021 E Awards. ■



“Now more than ever, we celebrate the resilience of companies and organizations for persevering and building a legacy of inclusion.”

— **Margo J. Posey**
President and CEO
Dallas Fort Worth
Minority Supplier
Diversity Council

Ingrid Robinson discusses lessons learned in 2021 and outlook for 2022

“The future for minority business development is bright. We must tell the story of MBEs and continue to show the value minority-owned businesses bring to corporate supply chains.”

— **Ingrid Robinson**
President and CEO
Houston Minority Supplier
Development Council



Q: *How would you describe 2021 versus 2020 for HMSDC and its MBEs?*

A: 2021 was a transition year for HMSDC. We quickly realized in 2020 that the needs of our MBEs and corporate members had changed due to the global pandemic.

As issues related to social injustice increased, climate change hit Houston — the BIG FREEZE — and business slowed. Supply-chain opportunities were limited to critical business functions, and corporations and government agencies began to rethink how to address both issues simultaneously. As an organization, we knew we needed to redesign our business model to ensure we were adding value to both of our major constituencies and that we play the role of solutions provider.

HMSDC focused on meeting the needs of corporate and government buyers through MBE development. We designed programs that would best prepare MBEs for recovery

post-COVID-19. We surveyed and worked with our public- and private-sector stakeholders including CPOs [chief procurement officers] from some of Houston’s leading Fortune 500 companies to understand the business opportunities and supplier requirements they would be looking for in new suppliers or expanding business with existing ones. We wanted to ensure we helped MBEs be forward-looking and prepared.

Oprah Winfrey once said: “Luck is when preparation meets opportunity.” In 2021, we engaged in getting MBEs prepared for upcoming opportunities. So, they wouldn’t need luck; they needed business deals!

For MBEs, the [2021] economy improved slightly, but there is still a great deal of uncertainty in the marketplace. Just as most businesses, MBEs are making very conservative financial business decisions because of fears of additional contracting of business markets due to COVID-19.

Many wanted to believe that COVID-19

was behind us when we received an effective vaccine. In reality, the surges from variants and a lack of consistent business guidance at various levels of government have made it difficult to hire and establish uniform business practices.

There is some good news! MBEs are optimistic about the future and are eager to grow and leverage changes they’ve made in their business models to reduce costs, leverage technology to connect with customers and rethink their service delivery models to address the growing demands for ethical companies with clear policies and emphasis on environmental, social and corporate governance.

MBEs are branching into new markets. They are keenly focused on customer retention and incremental growth with existing customers. By homing in on their customers’ needs and increasing overall customer satisfaction, many have stabilized their businesses. We’ve seen more teaming

among MBEs which is a strong sign of capacity-building.

Q: *What were the Council's major accomplishments in 2021?*

A: HMSDC provided MBEs:

Access to capital

- Awarded over \$60,000 in MBE Business Executive Scholarships.
- Assisted MBEs in gaining grants from San Jacinto College for training.
- Received FoundersFirstCDC Texas Job Creators Grants for MBEs.
- Advocated for and assisted MBEs in accessing Harris County Small Business Relief Fund grants.
- Assisted MBEs in accessing the Fort Bend County Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program.

Connect to business opportunities

- Shared over 5,000 bid opportunities with members.
- Reported over \$69 million in local corporate spend with HMSDC-certified MBEs.
- Reported 200% increase in reported MBE-to-MBE spend between HMSDC-certified MBEs.

MBE development

- Launched new development program Pathways to Excellence.
- Redesigned MBE development program MBE Leadership Academy.
- Hosted CEO Conversations program featuring CEOs and senior executives from: HEB, Motiva Enterprises, Mayor's Office - City of Houston, Greater Houston Partnership, IBM, Ethos Energy, Shell Oil and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.
- Hosted Learn-Educate-And-Develop (L.E.A.D.) Conversations live webinars with business and industry leaders on relevant topics to business growth.

Certification

- Provided over \$8,000 in recertification assistance to minority-owned businesses impacted by COVID-19.
- Increased the number of certified MBEs by 16% in 2021.

Advocacy

- Engaged in legislative efforts to increase

knowledge and advocate for the need to sustain State of Texas Historically Underutilized Business Program.

- Educated and screened candidates for local and municipal elected office.
- Testified and advocated for minority business goals because of disparity study findings from Harris County, Port [of] Houston [Authority] and METRO [Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County].
- Provided input into MBE self-performing standards for City of Houston contracts.

Q: *What were the biggest challenges faced by your MBEs this year, and how did the Council help them meet these?*

A: The biggest challenge our MBEs have had is access to new business opportunities. HMSDC has been recruiting new corporations to the Council to introduce new opportunities and new industry partners to our MBEs.

We've focused on making meaningful connections between MBEs and corporate buyers using a virtual platform to connect MBEs to specific opportunities, as well general introductions. But, by far, the focus has been on real opportunities with corporations committed to making a real difference.

Q: *What do you see as the biggest opportunities for MBEs in 2022?*

A: Economic data indicates that the biggest opportunities will be in these areas:

- Transportation and logistics distribution.
- Life sciences.
- Digital analytics.
- Maintenance, repair and operations.
- Telemedicine: human and veterinary.

Government investments will also create opportunities through the federal infrastructure investment and the Build Back Better investment should the latter bill pass in the U.S. Senate. Those funds will flow through local and municipal governments and companies that will create opportunities across industries and professions.

Q: *What are the Council's major goals for 2022?*

A: Most importantly, [a major goal] is to increase revenue to our MBEs by:

- Providing access to real and meaningful business opportunities.
- Connecting MBEs to public- and private-sector decision-makers.
- Developing MBEs to ensure we provide well-rounded, qualified and certified MBEs to corporate members.
- Assisting corporate members with developing world-class, supplier-diversity programs that incorporate diverse suppliers into the procurement process. By achieving full integration in the process, we can realize substantial growth in opportunities for MBEs.

Q: *What is your outlook for MBEs for 2022?*

A: My outlook for MBEs in 2022 is a slow-but-steady transition and recovery. MBEs are now looking forward to taking the best of what they've learned and instituted through the digital transformation of business in 2021 and leveraging it to become a competitive advantage in 2022. MBEs will be customer-centric, technologically improved, agile businesses with the expertise to position themselves as value-added suppliers.

I am hopeful that opportunities will arise as companies continue efforts to address their social responsibilities and impact, as well as their bottom lines. As consumers and communities become more concerned with social responsibility of companies, supplier diversity will play an even more important role in corporate ESG [environmental, social and governance] plans.

Q: *What's your vision for the future of minority business development and supplier diversity?*

A: The future for minority business development is bright. We must tell the story of MBEs and continue to show the value minority-owned businesses bring to corporate supply chains. We are committed to sharing the cascading impact the businesses have on improving the lives of others and the vitality of communities of color.

I am looking forward to the day in which MBEs are only limited by their imaginations — not their lack of access to capital. ■

 TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HMSDC, VISIT [HMSDC.ORG](https://hmsdc.org).

By the numbers

Number of
certified MBEs **785**

**\$4.7
billion** Wages earned
through MBE jobs

Reported MBE
revenues **\$16.8
billion**

5,000 Bids via Council

Economic production
of HMSDC members **\$23.2
billion**

**1,000-
plus** Referrals via Council

Jobs supported
by MBEs **82,300**

73 Number of certified
corporate members

Jobs at MBE firms **39,300**

10 Number of new corporate
HMSDC members in 2021

SOURCE: HMSDC

A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE. A VISION FOR SUCCESS.



Our ongoing commitment to developing and working with diverse and small businesses remains at the core of Vistra.

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Shining stars

HMSDC presents 2021 Rigel Awards

The Houston Minority Supplier Development Council recently presented its annual Rigel Awards to minority business enterprises and corporate leaders who have outshined all others in their commitment to minority business development.

“There are Rigel stars among us, and much closer to home,” said Ingrid Robinson, president and CEO, Houston Minority Supplier Development Council. “These Rigel stars radiate characteristics that allow them to stand out among the other stars. During good economic times or bad, these Rigel stars have remained luminous.”

The awards were presented during the 2021 HMSDC Virtual Business Expo. The honorees were:

SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

This award recognizes outstanding suppliers that encourage a more competitive and successful business environment for all council members.



Class 1 (annual sales up to \$1 million): TNR Accounting & Management Consultants LLC, **Nannette Ray**, president and CEO



Class 2 (annual sales \$1 million — \$10 million): Athenian Group LLC; **Bobby R. Dixon Jr.**, managing partner



Class 3 (annual sales \$10 million to \$50 million): Box Gang Manufacturing LLC; **Rafael Marrero**, president



Class 4 (over \$50 million): MCA Communications Inc., **Ricky Cortez**, CEO

STRATEGIC TEAMING AWARD

This award recognizes businesses that have formed successful teaming relationships to grow as individual companies and to grow together — as the aphorism says, “A rising tide, lifts all boats.”



Recruiting Source International, BJackson Enterprises LLC, VLC Distribution Inc. and Star International Inc. (from left): **Bianca Jackson**, chief operating officer, Recruiting Source International; **Delaina Curry Allen**, CEO, Recruiting Source International; **Jill Hopson**, owner, Star International; and **Bryan Jackson**, president, BJacksonEnterprises. Not pictured: VLC Distribution consultants **Lindsay Campbell** and **Levone Campbell**

ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award recognizes the individual whose efforts have reflected the highest commitment to minority business development and who best exhibits the “Advocate” pillar.



Zeba Mehra, director, purchasing and supply chain, Calpine Corp.

LOCAL CORPORATION OF THE YEAR AWARD

The award recognizes the major corporation or government agency on the local level that has best evidenced its commitment to minority business development.



Metropolitan Transit Authority of Houston, **Otis Johnson**, director, small business compliance, office of small business

EACH ONE - REACH ONE AWARD

This award recognizes the person who has recruited and assisted the most MBEs to become certified suppliers of HMSDC.



Vicki Semander, project manager, Global Force USA

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

This award celebrates the people and/or organizations who — in the opinion of the HMSDC president — have gone above and beyond to support the council in executing the mission of the organization.



Lorenza Butler, Butler/Wiseman

MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

These awards recognize corporate members who reported the largest increase in annual expenditures with HMSDC-certified MBEs in 2020. The companies had a combined spend of over \$149 million with HMSDC MBEs last year.



Exxon Mobil Corp.:
\$91.3 million, **Robin Hawkins**, manager,
supplier diversity



CenterPoint Energy Inc.:
\$25.1 million, **Linda Graves**, lead analyst



Baker Hughes Co.:
\$23.4 million, **Latoyia Brooks Harris**, supplier
diversity program leader,
indirect sourcing

MIDDLE MARKET ENGAGEMENT AWARD

This award recognizes a company for expanding minority business development to include their primes. This award is significant because not only are these companies working to expand business opportunities for MBEs within their companies, but they are also spreading the gospel of supplier diversity to their primes to ensure that MBEs can find opportunities to grow their businesses and bring value to their customers all along their supply chains.



CenterPoint Energy Inc.,
Linda Graves, lead analyst

PRIME SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award is presented to the prime supplier of an HMSDC corporate member who has supported that member's supplier diversity efforts by significantly expanding opportunities for MBEs along the supply chain.
Waste Management Inc. (Not pictured)

HELPING HAND AWARD

This award recognizes a person who — in the opinion of MBEs — has done the most to assist MBEs throughout the year and exemplifies the HMSDC “Connect” pillar.



Linda Graves, lead analyst,
CenterPoint Energy Inc.

NATIONAL CORPORATION OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award recognizes the major corporation or government agency on the local level that — in the opinion of the minority business owners — has best evidenced its commitment to minority business development.



Exxon Mobil Corp., **Robin Hawkins**, manager, supplier
diversity

INNOVATION AWARD

This award recognizes and encourages innovative practices in supplier diversity.
Waste Management Inc. (Not pictured)

MBE-TO-MBE AWARD

This award recognizes MBE suppliers who support other MBEs by reporting the largest annual expenditures with other HMSDC-certified MBEs.



SolvChem Inc.
Jean-Pierre Baizan,
president



DWG CPA PLLC
Darrell Groves,
founder



TNR Accounting &
Management
Consulting LLC,
Nannette Ray, president
and CEO

ACCOUNTABILITY CHAMPIONS

This award recognizes corporations and MBEs that help grow expenditures through corporate-to-MBE and MBE-to-MBE relationships.

Corporate Accountability Champions

- Accenture PLC
- Baker Hughes Co.
- BMC Corporate
- CenterPoint Energy Inc.
- Direct Energy LP
- Exxon Mobil Corp.
- Fluor Corp.
- Metropolitan Transit Authority of Houston
- NRG Energy Inc.
- Southern Tire Mart
- UT MD Anderson Cancer Center
- Vistra Corp.

MBE Accountability Champions

- American Services Inc.
- Chickasaw Distributors Inc.
- DWG CPA PLLC
- Langrand and Company LLC
- SolvChem Inc.
- TNR Accounting and Management Consultants LLC
- VIA Engineering Services LLC

CHAIRMAN'S AWARD

This prestigious award recognizes a corporate member or MBE supplier who — in the chair's opinion — emulates the best traits of an active representative of HMSDC.



Mark Praigg, retired
business advisor, Houston
Minority Business
Development Agency
Business Center

Karen Box discusses lessons learned in 2021 and outlook for 2022

“Our vision is to create economic equality and growth for minority businesses. We do this [vision] by connecting certified minority businesses to our corporate members to increase procurement and enhance supplier diversity.”

— Karen Box

President and CEO
Southwest Minority Supplier
Development Council



Q: How would you describe 2021 versus 2020 for Southwest Minority Supplier Development Council and its minority business enterprises?

A: 2020 was a year of upheaval which elevated supplier-diversity efforts in 2021. Our corporations stepped up and are coming to the table with more projects targeted to minority businesses. Many of our corporate members are dedicating spend dollars for minority small businesses that may have suffered through some of the injustice and discrimination, causing them not to prosper as much as others.

Championing the economic impact driven by minority business development – and its impact upon the community – is vital to the global economy. In response, corporations are looking for innovative ways to drive growth and minority business inclusion.

Q: What were the Council's major accomplishments in 2021?

A: The Council experienced many accomplishments in 2021. It increased the number of certified MBEs, subscriptions, recertifications and local corporate members — along with continuing to assist minority-owned businesses with their growth and expansion.

SMSDC held over 10 virtual events with participation from over 500 corporate members, certified MBEs and community partners.

These events included the very successful MBE “Idol” [see related story on Page 40] and major conferences such as Premier Face Time Expo and Diversity at the Border. Each of the events hosted offered a virtual platform for corporate members and suppliers to discuss upcoming business opportunities. SMSDC’s board of directors and

staff worked diligently to advance its four pillars — CERTIFY - DEVELOP - CONNECT - ADVOCATE.

Q: What were the biggest challenges faced by your MBEs this year, and how did the Council help them meet these?

A: Encompassing southwest Texas — in addition to the states of Oklahoma and New Mexico — the Southwest Minority Supplier Development Council is committed to being focused and innovative in meeting the needs of its certified minority businesses and corporate members across a large and diverse geographic region. SMSDC still must be able to deliver exemplary services to both our certified MBEs and corporations in this extended service area.

With all SMSDC’s events being virtual in 2021, there was an increased response to all the events including our Premier Face Time EXPO and Diversity at the Bor-

der, which featured the successful Buyers' Breakfast Roundtable .

The New Frontier MBE Showcase — created to advocate business opportunities for MBEs and develop relationships — featured business presentations from certified MBEs as well as our local corporate members and corporations. Our classes — Benchmarking PLUS+ and Capacity PLUS+ platforms — also saw an uptick in attendance. They are taught by Reginald Layton, board chair SMSDC, and vice president, supplier diversity and supply chain sustainability, Johnson Controls International PLC.

Sustainability remained high on our radar as our MBEs continued to find the impetus to engage in new strategic levels of impactful engagement. Many of our corporate members have projects that are not just for one geographic area.

They have projects that have a national scope or, perhaps, even a global scope. Our minority businesses must be able to perform nationally and globally, so learning how to scale their businesses is key. We even talk about teaming opportunities, joint venture opportunities and strategic alliance opportunities, so businesses learn these are key components of a strategy for success. Also, we are sharing with our MBEs the positive impact when they can do near-shore and onshore projects. Our corporate members are looking more for those companies to do business with.

Q: *What do you see as the biggest opportunities for MBEs in 2022?*

A: New, strong collaborative partnerships and promising opportunities are on

the horizon to help our MBEs stimulate the economic ripples that promote business growth, job creation and drive market innovation. According to The Texas Tribune, "Biden's infrastructure plan will set aside about \$35 billion for Texas projects."

The White House estimates that Texas will receive about \$35.44 billion over five years for roads, bridges, pipes, ports, broadband access and other projects after federal lawmakers passed a long-anticipated infrastructure bill.

New partnerships [have formed] because corporate goals have changed not only due to COVID-19, but [also due] to supply-chain management complications being experienced around the globe. Teaming and joint ventures, access to capital, succession planning and mentor-protégé programs all contribute to the sustainability of an MBE.

Corporations are made more efficient and profitable by working with diverse suppliers. They bring new insights and capabilities to the table.

Q: *What are the Council's major goals for 2022?*

A: Certifying more minority businesses in our service area to help corporations meet their supplier-diversity goals remains paramount in 2022. With the current disruption in supply-chain management being experienced around the globe, the marketplace has changed around us. We must continue to provide greater services — the resources that are required to meet demand.

Sustainability is high on our radar. Helping corporations ramp up their supplier-diversity goals and programs, succession

planning, growth initiative programs and establishing new partnerships are integral components to MBEs scaling their businesses and getting to the next level to meet corporate customer needs.

Q: *What is your outlook for MBEs for 2022?*

A: We are excited about future conversations. The outlook appears to be favorable, and we need to help to prepare MBEs to take advantage of these upcoming opportunities — teaching MBEs how to use their certifications to highlight the focus on growing their businesses. [They must] not just work in their businesses; they [also] must work on their businesses.

Q: *What's your vision for the future of minority business development and supplier diversity?*

A: Our vision is to create economic equality and growth for minority businesses. We do this by connecting certified minority businesses to our corporate members to increase procurement and enhance supplier diversity.

SMSDC's dedicated board of directors and staff have mapped out a diverse array of networking events, educational seminars and connecting opportunities that will drive minority businesses' development forward. We are excited about adding value, building relationships and better serving our stakeholders. ■

 TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SMSDC, VISIT [SMSDC.ORG](https://www.smsdc.org).



By the numbers

Number of
certified MBEs **605**

Reported MBE
revenues **\$12.03
billion**

Jobs supported MBEs **36,897**

23,516 Number of MBE employees
that are minority

4,150 Bids, referrals and plans
disseminated by council

18 Number of industries represented
by corporate members

SOURCE: SMSDC





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END-TO-END SOLUTIONS

Group O is a Corporate Plus Member of the National Minority Supplier Development Council and National Minority Supplier of the Year.



Telling the story

Mindful Media's Kara Elyse Henderson wins SMSDC Idol of the Year

BY TONYA MCMURRAY

When Kara Elyse Henderson, founder and creative director of Mindful Media LLC, entered the Southwest Minority Supplier Development Council's 2021 Idol of the Year pitch competition, she found herself in the familiar position of being the youngest company in the group.

Mindful Media, founded in 2020, is a boutique creative agency specializing in digital content creation for individuals, brands and organizations.

"We're often one of the youngest groups present at the table, engaged in conversations with or pursuing these clients who are renowned locally, nationally or even globally," Henderson said. "Being selected as the MBE Idol for 2021 was a reinforcement that to be young is a strength. We know that doesn't – or shouldn't – automatically reflect inexperience. Now we're confident that others and decision-makers do, too."

SMSDC's MBE Idol gives minority business enterprises the opportunity to deliver their best five-minute pitch to a panel of supplier diversity professionals and business leaders who provide feedback and advice.

"MBEs can brag about their business, gain exposure, find new clients and tell their story as no one else could," said Carol Thomas, chief of staff for SMSDC. "Entering MBE Idol demonstrates their dedication to their company and their willingness to creatively engage in new marketing, branding and PR strategies to grow their business. Win or lose, they will come away from the pitch competition with new ideas, a more polished elevator pitch and new connections."

Henderson said Thomas, SMSDC President and CEO Karen Box, SMSDC MBEIC chair and board member Deborah Treviño and others were important mentors throughout the process.

"They sought to ensure we walked away with skills and resources that could help us following the competition," Henderson said. "This opportunity forced us to hone in on the most effective way to share our capabilities and show that we have value."

Box said Henderson was able to use the MBE Idol process to develop a strong and effective pitch.

"The MBE Idol Class of 2021 had exceptional MBEs participating," Box said. "They challenged and encouraged each other throughout the competition. Kara's final presentation had the 'wow' factor, exclaimed one of the judges. She had taken the feedback given by the judges throughout the competition and incorporated it into her final presentation. The result was a relevant, clear and concise outstanding noteworthy presentation."



Kara Elyse Henderson, founder and creative director, Mindful Media LLC

“Being selected as the MBE Idol for 2021 was a reinforcement that to be young is a strength. We know that doesn’t - or shouldn’t - automatically reflect inexperience. Now we’re confident that others and decision-makers do, too.”

— Kara Elyse Henderson

Henderson said she believes a key to her success in the competition was concisely and authentically conveying both Mindful Media’s capabilities and its mission.

Mindful Media was founded on the values of quality, equity and sustainability, she said. Henderson had worked as a model while attending the University of Texas at Austin and noticed the lack of diversity in the teams with whom she worked.

“A lot of the people who were brought in by these brands and organizations to generate content did not look like me,” she said. “We were not the same gender. We were not the same ethnicity.”

As a teaching assistant at UT-Austin, she knew there was a pool of diverse talent. She founded Mindful Media soon after graduating to pro-

vide greater opportunity for a wider range of talented artists. More than half the firm’s staff are minorities.

Mindful Media has clients across multiple industries but focuses on companies looking to make a positive impact through advocacy, empowerment and education. It has delivered content for Stepping Into Service and Black Voters Matter, Everybody Studios (a

minority-owned firm promoting health and wellness through movement), Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Make Music Day Austin, which builds community through music. 360 Agency Berlin, an advertising agency that primarily promotes sustainable brands, previously invited them to collaborate on a project.

“‘Mindful’ was a very intentional choice when we were thinking about the name,” Henderson said. “We’re mindful about the people and the clients we partner with. We especially enjoy those projects where we’re able to elevate people, organizations or brands that truly seek to have a positive impact in their local community or in the world.” ■

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MINDFUL MEDIA, VISIT MINDFULXMEDIA.COM.



“Kara’s final presentation had the ‘wow’ factor, exclaimed one of the judges. She had taken the feedback given by the judges throughout the competition and incorporated it into her final presentation. The result was a relevant, clear and concise outstanding noteworthy presentation.”

— Karen Box

President and CEO
Southwest Minority
Supplier Development
Council

Coming in the next issue of MBN Texas



- ➔ Trend Watch: Automobility, Technology
- ➔ Construction Industry Special Section
- ➔ African American Business Spotlight
- ➔ Education Pipeline: HBCUs and PBIs
- ➔ Rising Texas MBE Stars: The Next Generation of MBEs in the Supply Chain
- ➔ Texas Multicultural Chambers of Commerce Spotlights

Taking flight

Vistra's Annette Underwood ensures diversity initiatives have wings for the long haul

BY MICHELE MAJORS BROWN

Annette Underwood's path to an employee relations career might best be described as the road — or, better yet, the route — less traveled: She entered the professional world as a flight attendant. It's an experience that, over 20 years with Delta Air Lines Inc., shaped her for what lied ahead.

"Being in an environment where you never have control over who you were interacting with taught you to think fast, evaluate and influence quickly — just how to deal with a lot of people," said Underwood, Vistra Corp.'s first chief diversity officer. "Going through 9/11, going through Delta's crash, all of that strengthened my people skills and my coping skills, and that was my biggest lesson to date."

Underwood's time at Delta ultimately led her to Dallas, Texas-based Vistra, a leading integrated retail electricity and power generation company with more than 5,000 employees. She was working on the employee relations team, as a manager and director, when Vistra — and the nation — faced the reality of the country's systemic racism and inequality through the lens of George Floyd's murder.

The summer of 2020 prompted Vistra CEO Curt Morgan to act.

"He's a strong CEO. He's very transparent and not afraid to show emotion," Underwood said. "He said, 'We have got to do something.' He kind of put himself out there and said, 'We're going to do something. I just don't know what yet.'"

LISTENING SESSIONS

Initial conversations between Morgan and Vistra's Chief Administrator Officer Carrie Kirby led to the development of 28 virtual listening sessions for employees, leaning heavily on Underwood's employee relations skill set. Those sessions gave employees the opportunity to share a wide range of experiences and perspectives — and for others to listen.

"The executives attended all 28 sessions and listened to what employees had experienced in the company," Underwood said. "As we went through that, we really just started building this program. We created a diversity council. At the time, I didn't think there would be a chief diversity officer for a couple of years, but I told my boss, 'I don't know what you plan to do with this, but I want to help build it.'"

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

The opportunity to build on Vistra's diversity program came quickly. Just months after those listening sessions, in December 2020, the Vistra board approved the addition of a chief diversity officer.

"I applied, thinking if I don't get it, I still have a great job. We have a pretty awesome workforce. Vistra was already a good place



Annette Underwood, chief diversity officer, Vistra Corp.



We have a pretty awesome workforce. Vistra was already a good place to work. Most people are happy. Even in the listening sessions, they said that, but there was some substantial work we needed to do in the diversity space.

— ANNETTE UNDERWOOD

to work. Most people are happy,” Underwood said. “Even in the listening sessions, they said that, but there was some substantial work we needed to do in the diversity space. So, I applied in January.”

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT AND RECRUITMENT

When Underwood accepted the job, she hit the ground running, looking for ways to implement some of the employee suggestions from the summer listening sessions.

“We heard that loud and clear during the listening sessions from all groups, all races, all levels, that we had this practice of going external for the bulk of our hires, and people felt like there was no movement or opportunity,” she said.

Underwood met with recruitment teams to ensure that Vistra’s internal candidates had an opportunity to compete for open positions.

That involved taking a hard look at existing teams and explaining the meaning of diversity.

“Because when you say diversity, people automatically think you’re talking about race, or if not, you’re probably talking about gender,” Underwood said. “So, what we have to constantly do is say, ‘No, everybody’s valued. We need white males, too. We need allies. Everybody brings something to the table.’”

THREE DISTINCT CULTURES

Another challenge Underwood faced early on was bridging gaps between three distinct cultures within the company — retail, traditional corporate and generation — all with different motivations and ways of communicating. Under her leadership, the company created seven new employee resource groups, aimed at bringing those teams together.

For example, the resource group Bridging the Gap helps bridge the gap for Vistra employees looking to grow professionally but are unsure where to go for questions or advice. The group brings together a diverse group of plant and corporate employees to support



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At the end of the day, we are taking a company of 5,000, and we are tackling the initiatives that America’s tackling. We’re not in it for the pats on the back. It’s just the right thing to do.

— ANNETTE UNDERWOOD

and provide access to Vistra’s greater network of opportunities.

Underwood, who came from humble beginnings, said providing exposure can help many people grow and achieve success and see different career possibilities.

“Providing people opportunities is the best that you can do, giving somebody an opportunity to provide for their family or get that first house or whatever their goals may be,” she said. “I didn’t come from a wealthy family. I didn’t even come from a middle-class family. I came from a single mother of five kids. If people hadn’t taken it upon themselves to expose me and give me opportunities and say, ‘How about trying this?’ I don’t know that I would be where I am today. If a door opened, I was definitely going to take advantage. I wasn’t afraid.”

COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION

A commitment to community and higher education became a third component of Vistra’s diversity program, fueled by the company’s \$10 million pledge over five years to invest in underserved communities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, other minority-serving colleges and universities, and diversity-focused organizations. Some of those initiatives have included partnering with Texas Southern University, The University of Texas at Arlington, Prairie View A&M University, Paul Quinn College, Hispanic College Fund and the United Negro College Fund.

“It has been really enjoyable because we’re putting our money where our mouth is, and not just this year because it’s the hottest thing, but for the next five years and beyond,” Underwood said.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Underwood has big plans for the future of Vistra’s diversity program but tries to stay rooted in what matters most.

“My biggest focus, of course, is on our people and making sure they feel valued. If you’ve been in corporate America, you know it can seem like the opportunities aren’t there, because you don’t see people like you at certain levels,” she said. “At the end of the day, we are taking a company of 5,000, and we are tackling the initiatives that America’s tackling. We’re not in it for the pats on the back. It’s just the right thing to do.” ■

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT VISTRA,
VISIT VISTRACORP.COM.

Unity is the root — diversity is the fruit

Celebrating diversity helps build unified, diverse cultures

BY GEORGEANN H. IKUMA

When it comes to adding value and enhancing supply chain performance, corporate America understands that diversity matters. For Steve Gandara, co-founder and managing director of Excellent Cultures Inc., however, it's actually how a company achieves diversity that matters most.

Like most corporate training and programs that attempt to cause human beings to change from the outside-in, diversity, equity and inclusion programs can produce temporary and limited results at best.

“From diversity to inclusion, everything is rooted in culture,” said Gandara, who, as a Hispanic American, understands the necessity for diversity in the business world. “The Excellent Cultures Method focuses on building cultures of unity that celebrate diversity and meaningful lasting change from the inside out.”

Gandara employs seasoned business consultants, coaches, and corporate trainers to assist businesses in achieving their desired outcome of winning, building, and sustaining the type of cultures that produce a measurable impact on a company's revenue, cost savings, and bottom line.

“When you have a corporate culture of unity that celebrates diversity, equity occurs automatically,” he said. “You can no longer win with just talented individuals; it's the best team that wins.”

As an example, Gandara points to the NBA and WNBA as organizations that demonstrate the culture that really wins most, because they have created a culture where unity is the priority and diversity is celebrated rather than forced or merely tolerated.

“As we've most recently seen in society, diversity without unity produces chaos,” he said. “I recently had the opportunity to interview former NBA coach of the year, Dell Harris. Del has successfully coached 5 NBA Teams, the Puerto Rican Team and the Chinese National Team. When I asked what he thought of diversity and inclusion, he said, ‘I really get into diversity because it works, but inclusion not so much, because the only color that matters on a basketball team is the color of your jersey.’”

Gandara summarizes that “inclusion is the wrong word because nobody wants to be included—they want to be celebrated.”

BEST CULTURES FOR THE BEST COMPANIES

Gandara and Excellent Cultures have spent the past four decades creating the best cultures in the world for the best companies in the world—from Toyota and Microsoft, to Costco, Subway and numerous smaller companies.

Using a unique combination of scientific assessment data and proprietary technology, his team has designed and orchestrated strategies delivering client ROIs ranging from 225% to 1750% in less than two years.

(continued on page 61)



Steve Gandara, co-founder and managing director, Excellent Cultures Inc.



When you have a corporate culture of unity that celebrates diversity, equity occurs automatically. You can no longer win with just talented individuals; it's the best team that wins.

— STEVE GANDARA

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Protecting brands

NaVOBA creates opportunities for veterans **BY BRENDA BEVERIDGE**

The National Veteran Owned Business Association — an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization led by corporate America — has been actively certifying its demographic since 2017. Its mission is to create corporate contracting opportunities for America’s veterans’ and service-disabled veterans’ business enterprises — VBEs and SDVBEs — through certification, advocacy, outreach, recognition and education.

NaVOBA proudly serves as the official veteran-owned business partner of the National Business Inclusion Consortium, along with National Minority Supplier Development Council Inc., National LGBT Chamber of Commerce and Women’s Business Enterprise National Council, to name a few.

NaVOBA’s VBE/SDVBE certifications directly mirror those of the minority business enterprise and women’s business enterprise certifications and ensure that any certified VBE/SDVBE is at least 51% owned, operated and controlled by one or more U.S. military veterans.

One of the defining characteristics of NaVOBA’s board of directors is two-thirds of its board of directors’ seats are held by corporations to ensure its alignment with the needs of corporate supplier diversity programs.

“We built our board around areas of expertise,” said Heather Herndon Wright, NaVOBA chair. “A differentiator between NaVOBA and other veteran-certifying organizations is that our board of directors is corporately driven. One of the reasons we created NaVOBA was because we wanted an organization that we felt confident would protect our brands.”

Although the board of directors was not

seated until 2019, the move was deliberate, she said.

“We waited to seat the governing board of directors until we had a senior-level finance officer to serve as treasurer to ensure our financials were set up properly and transparently,” Wright said. “We were fortunate to get two corporate allies to step up, and we now have two co-treasurers from AT&T [Inc.] and [The] Boeing [Co.]”

Another innovative approach NaVOBA has taken to make things easier for their veteran business owners is to fully digitize its certification application, administration and sourcing process online through a system developed by AdaptOne. All veterans are also prescreened and prequalified through a third party that verifies their veterans’ status with the U.S. Department of Defense.

“We do not allow them to even start the application process until their eligibility is confirmed,” said Matt Pavelek, president of NaVOBA. “Once verified, they are still required to submit a DD214 [certificate of release or discharge from active-duty military service] and other eligibility information, along with the required documentation.”

Although launched in 2017, the online process became fully operational in 2020, and now allows corporate allies, certified VBEs and partner organizations to search by criteria such as keyword, revenues, number of employees, location, geography served, etc. And it also allows veterans to upload marketing and promotion information.

“It’s a very robust sourcing tool,” Wright said. ■



Heather Herndon Wright, chair, National Veteran Owned Business Association



Matt Pavelek, president, NaVOBA

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NaVOBA, VISIT NAVOBA.ORG.



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TAKING ROOT

The journey continues for BDR as it marks 20th anniversary



BY M.V. GREENE

For the Billion Dollar Roundtable Inc., or BDR, — at age 20 — the journey continues.

The corporate-based advocacy organization is marking the 20th anniversary of its founding this year, still advancing a vision to lead, influence and shape supplier-diversity excellence globally.

Since 2001, BDR has recognized and celebrated U.S. companies with a demonstrated commitment of an annual supply-chain diversity spend of \$1 billion or more, while collaborating and targeting best practices that move the function forward.

Sharon Patterson, who co-founded the organization with Shirley Harrison and Don McKneely, said BDR remains as relevant now as it was at the founding. “The vision for the future of supplier diversity is full of hope,” Patterson said. “It involves the awarding of continued growth opportunities, training and development to all

“Supplier diversity is receiving outstanding attention worldwide. It’s an exciting time. Investment entities interested in investing in diverse businesses are making funds available in record numbers. This is the time to invest in diverse suppliers to help them build capacity and elevate capability.”

– Sharon Patterson, president and CEO, Billion Dollar Roundtable Inc.



types of diverse suppliers in corporate supply chains at every level.”

HOW DID BDR TAKE ROOT?

Patterson and Harrison were working with a corporate group when the company’s composite procurement spend with

minority- and women-owned businesses reached \$1 billion in 2001. They and the C-suite were thrilled at the achievement and wanted to celebrate the milestone and keep that spend momentum going, Patterson recalled.

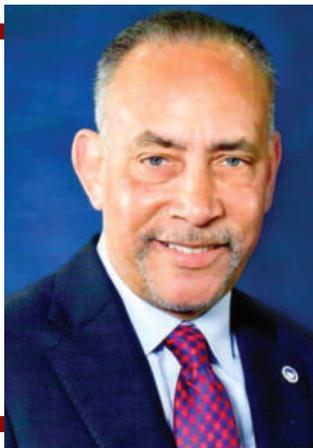
“They also wondered what other corporations had achieved the same milestone and what could be learned by a confluence of ideas from this accomplishment,” she said.

Enter MBN USA publisher Don McKneely, president and CEO of TexCorp Communications Inc., and conversations began among the co-founders. He had created a model in his publications for a “Million Dollar Roundtable,” a group of supply-chain procurement individuals who spent more than \$1 million annually with minority suppliers that served as an inspiration for what was to come, Patterson said.

The co-founders brainstormed ideas, surveyed other corporations and then put forth an ambitious plan to launch an organization where the diversity spend thresh

“Yes, it is difficult to get to \$1 billion and to sustain it. Corporations must think hard and long about their commitments to diverse suppliers to drive the change needed to deliver a \$1 billion-plus [spend].”

– Shelley Stewart Jr., chairman, BDR



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“Twenty years ago, we were making good progress and seeing positive success in supplier diversity. The whole idea was to build on that success and take supplier diversity to the next level. The creation of the Billion Dollar Roundtable gave companies a new focus and new targets they could shoot for. We found that very positive and very progressive companies wanted to be a part of this movement.”

– Don McKneely, publisher, MBN USA
BDR founding chairman

old would be \$1 billion, thus the creation of Billion Dollar Roundtable Inc.

“Twenty years ago, we were making good progress and seeing positive success in supplier diversity. The whole idea was to build on that success and take supplier diversity to the next level. The creation of the Billion Dollar Roundtable gave companies a new focus and new targets they could shoot for. We found that very positive and very progressive companies wanted to be a part of this movement,” McKneely said.

Ten charter member companies joined the not-for-profit effort in 2001, including current members AT&T, IBM, Walmart, Verizon Communications, General Motors, Ford and Daimler Chrysler— now Stellantis.

Fast forward 20 years, and BDR is sticking to its founding principles — promoting thought leadership on key topics in supplier diversity, conducting annual best practices summits, launching new initiatives and programs, and collaborating with like-minded organizations. BDR recently marked its anniversary at its annual summit, titled “Celebrating Two Decades of Resiliency & Transformation,” which was conducted for the first time as a virtual event because of the pandemic.

Today, 28 corporations — including the seven charter members — make up BDR’s roster of member companies. In addition to the charter members, other BDR member companies are Adient Apple, Avis Budget Group, Bank of America, Boeing, CDW, Comcast/NBCUniversal, Cummins, CVS Health, Dell, Exelon, Honda North America, Johnson & Johnson, JPMorgan Chase, Kaiser Permanente, Kroger, Merck, Microsoft, Pacific Gas and Electric, Procter & Gamble and Toyota Motor North America.

A 2020 BDR report showed that documented composite supply-chain diversity spend of its member companies had reached \$115 billion.

BDR Chairman Shelley Stewart Jr., retired vice president and chief procurement officer at E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., noted that BDR is an organization that relies on collaboration among its corporate members — even among market competitors — to advance solutions that will benefit the whole universe of the practice of supplier diversity.

In 2020, for instance, BDR launched its BDR Connects webinar series, a recurring program that brings in subject matter experts to tackle specific topics in supplier diversity, such as trends affecting supplier diversity in the automotive and food industries, impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on business strategies and impact of global business environments.

In another initiative, BDR is updating its book, “Supplier Diversity Best Practices: Building Excellence to Improve the Supply-Chain Matrix,” to refresh and examine additional best-practice areas for operating viable and successful supplier-diversity programs to achieve billion-dollar spend.

Regarding policy positions, in 2018 BDR added certifications from disability- and veteran-owned enterprises — along with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender- or LGBT-owned enterprises — to minority- and women-owned businesses, as a means for expanding the reach of opportunities for diverse companies.

Stewart said that often corporations will need to undergo organizational culture changes to reach the billion-dollar spend breakthrough, requiring the involvement of leadership at all levels of the organization. As a condition of membership, BDR member companies are audited annually to ensure they continue to meet the spend threshold.

“Yes, it is difficult to get to \$1 billion and to sustain it. Corporations must think hard and long about their commitments to diverse suppliers to drive the change needed to deliver a \$1 billion-plus [spend],” he said.

Stewart added that BDR works with corporations seeking to achieve BDR membership through its Ambassador program, in which a current member company is assigned to a prospective member to review requirements.

Patterson said BDR looks forward to pushing ahead with innovative achievements that will continue to propel the organization.

“Supplier diversity is receiving outstanding attention worldwide. It’s an exciting time. Investment entities interested in investing in diverse businesses are making funds available in record numbers. This is the time to invest in diverse suppliers to help them build capacity and elevate capability,” she said. ■

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BDR, VISIT BILLIONDOLLARROUNDTABLE.ORG.

**BDR PAST CHAIRMEN 2001-2021
IN ORDER OF SUCCESSION**

- Don McKneely
- Jethro Joseph
- Bill Moon
- Rick Hughes
- Shelley Stewart



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RESILIENCY & TRANSFORMATION

BDR summit examines strategies to grow minority businesses

BY M.V. GREENE

The Billion Dollar Roundtable Inc. took root in 2001 as a collaborative, corporate-based organization to recognize and celebrate U.S. companies with a demonstrated commitment to engaging minority-owned companies for procurement opportunities within their supply chains.

As the BDR name implies, 20 years ago at the organization's founding, corporations would freely obligate themselves to supply-chain diversity spend of \$1 billion or more annually with diverse suppliers on a first-tier basis.

At its recent annual summit, the BDR recognized its charter member companies: AT&T, Ford, General Motors, IBM, Stellantis (then Daimler Chrysler Corp.), Verizon and Walmart. The inaugural BDR class also

agreed to share best practices — even among competitors — and cooperate on initiatives to benefit the overall supplier diversity universe, moving the practice forward.

RESILIENT AND TRANSFORMATIVE

The 2021 BDR summit, titled “Celebrating Two Decades of Resiliency & Transformation,” was designed to do what BDR summits have done since their founding — engage thought leaders, corporate executives, chief procurement officers, supply diversity practitioners, advocates, policy-makers, diverse business owners and other stakeholders in frank discussions about how to grow and sustain diverse businesses. Through supply-chain engagement, the prevailing thinking is that major corporations can lead in driving economic empowerment by creating jobs and wealth in minority communities.

“We get to bring innovative suppliers into [Bristol Myers Squibb Co.] and help diverse suppliers bring economic empowerment to their communities because we know that diverse suppliers overwhelmingly hire from their communities,” said summit panelist Farryn Melton, senior vice president and chief procurement officer at the global pharmaceutical company Bristol Myers Squibb.

Held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, summit panels included discussions on the growth and development of diverse businesses, the introduction of a BDR-launched health care collaborative chartered to identify and expand the utilization of Black-owned businesses in the sector, and an examination of how diverse firms can expand into global markets.

The summit also heard from Ying McGuire, the new CEO and president of the National Minority Supplier Development



“We get to bring innovative suppliers into [Bristol Myers Squibb Co.] and help diverse suppliers bring economic empowerment to their communities because we know that diverse suppliers overwhelmingly hire from their communities.”

— Farryn Melton, senior vice president, chief procurement officer, Bristol Myers Squibb Co.

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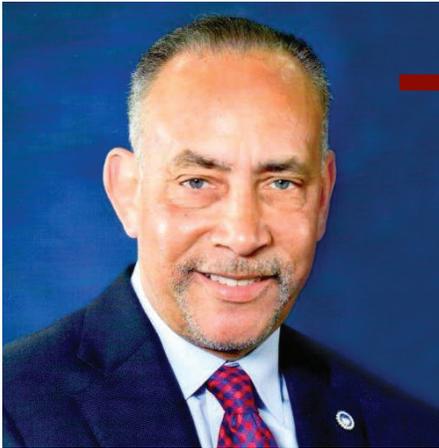
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“Diverse suppliers have a lot to add as it relates to efficiencies. They are nimble, and they bring value to the supply chains.”

– Shelley Stewart Jr., chairman,
Billion Dollar Roundtable Inc.

Council Inc., who praised BDR member companies for being “the best of the best” in helping to drive opportunities for diverse suppliers.

In his welcome to summit attendees, BDR Chairman Shelley Stewart Jr. noted that access to capital — along with expanded capacity and capability — among diverse firms has the attention of CPOs and executives at major corporations.

“Diverse suppliers have a lot to add as it relates to efficiencies. They are nimble, and they bring value to the supply chains,” he said.

Through the unrest that erupted in the United States and globally in 2020, the role of corporate supplier diversity takes on even greater urgency, BDR co-founder, president and CEO Sharon Patterson told attendees. She noted that many more corporations have joined in what long has been the work of the BDR by committing to address racial and societal inequities in a meaningful way.

“This is a fantastic moment in history,” she said. “The focus on supplier diversity is unprecedented. Today, we offer opportuni-

ty, hope and passion around the supplier-diversity arena.”

In addition to celebrating the 20th year of BDR’s founding, Patterson added that the objective of the 2021 summit was to continue the momentum surrounding the support of diverse businesses “to ensure that the value of supplier diversity remains resilient, as it transforms the supply chains of major corporations.”

PROJECT BLACK

One of the summit’s key events was the fireside chat featuring Melody Hobson, co-CEO and president at Ariel Investments LLC, in a discussion with former Silicon Valley technology executive and investor Stacy Brown-Philpot about Ariel’s Project Black initiative. Project Black’s mission seeks to “minoritize” about 8-10 businesses and scale them for high-margin vertical sectors.

“This scale challenge is real,” she said. “Ninety-five percent of minority businesses today have less than \$5 million in revenue. That is our challenge.”

Hobson launched Project Black in February through the creation of Ariel Alternatives — her firm’s first private equity initiative to invest in middle-market companies — that currently may or may not be minority-owned — with the intention of transforming these companies into certified minority-owned business enterprises of scale. The objective, she told the summit, is to forge a new class of Black and Latinx entrepreneurs who can provide differentiated, high-quality products and services to Fortune 500 customers in some of the largest areas of corporate spend.

Project Black is approaching business diversity by directly addressing not only the issue of capital formation, but also how to drive customers to minority-owned companies, Hobson said.

“We need Black and Brown businesses in this country that can handle those \$100 million purchase orders,” Hobson said. “No one wants to write 50 \$2 million purchase orders when you can write one \$100 million purchase order.”

“This is a fantastic moment in history. The focus on supplier diversity is unprecedented. Today, we offer opportunity, hope and passion around the supplier-diversity arena.”

– Sharon Patterson, president and CEO, BDR



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- Make brands look good
- Obsess over details

- Treasure relationships
- Value our team
- Encourage diversity
- Keep Learning
- Exceed expectations
- Have fun

We Don't

- Sacrifice quality for profit
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“We need Black and Brown businesses in this country that can handle those \$100 million purchase orders. No one wants to write 50 \$2 million purchase orders when you can write one \$100 million purchase order.”

– Mellody Hobson, co-CEO and president, Ariel Investments LLC



She explained that Ariel launched the initiative when, during the height of the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, she received a call from Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO of JP-Morgan Chase & Co., a BDR member company and where she serves as a director on the company’s board. He shared with Hobson how corporations wanted to step up and provide greater support to Black-owned businesses.

Hobson said she immediately went to work, sketching out a memo for Dimon that served as the genesis of Project Black. She also began recruiting key business leaders like Stacy Brown-Philpot — former CEO of TaskRabbit Inc. and a board member of Noom, HP and Nordstrom. — to join the initiative.

It was John W. Rogers Jr., Ariel’s founder, chairman, co-CEO and chief investment officer, who honed in on the notion that as im-

portant as the capital piece was for diverse businesses, there also should be an emphasis on obtaining customers for Project Black companies, Hobson said.

“John said, ‘I’m not saying access to capital is not important; it is. But I think access to customers may be more important,’” she said.

In researching corporate spend, Hobson said Project Black determined that Fortune 500 companies spend about 2% of procurement with diverse businesses — despite a stated goal to spend 10% to 15%.

“There is a trillion-dollar opportunity, but we don’t have a lot of businesses that can meet the scale challenge,” she said.

Hobson identified the eight vertical sectors targeted by Project Black:

- Financial and professional
- Health care
- Industrial

- Media and marketing
- Non-core business process outsourcing
- Primary manufacturing and packaging
- Technology
- Transportation and logistics

“Our dream is that in a decade, [Project Black] we will have created over 100,000 Black and Latinx jobs — and not just jobs, but careers. We want people to have the opportunity to advance and grow,” Hobson said. “We believe that in a decade we would have created a number of billion-dollar Black and Latinx businesses. At the end of the day, the big goal is to narrow the wealth gap in this country to create opportunities for capitalism to work for everyone and not just a select few.” ■

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BDR, VISIT BILLIONDOLLARROUNDTABLE.ORG.

BDR CELEBRATES 20-YEAR COMMITMENT OF CHARTER MEMBERS

Charter members AT&T, Ford, General Motors, IBM, Stellantis (then Daimler Chrysler) Verizon and Walmart helped launch the Billion Dollar Roundtable Inc. 20 years ago with co-founders Sharon Patterson, Don McKneely and Shirley Harris, putting an imprint on the concept that corporate procurement through supply chains could be an effective mechanism to grow diverse businesses.

During its annual summit, attendees received glimpses via video presentation of the achievements in supplier diversity of charter members, some of whose efforts predate them joining BDR. Examples include:

- AT&T Inc.’s spending nearly \$200 billion with diverse suppliers going back to 1968.
- IBM Corp. currently operating supplier diversity programs in 170 countries where it does business.
- General Motors Co. working with more than 300

diverse suppliers and small businesses currently within its supply chain.

Since BDR’s founding, 21 other major U.S.-based corporations have gained membership in BDR. Membership is not a given, as spend is audited annually to ensure the \$1 billion threshold with Tier I diverse suppliers is achieved.

In addition to charter members, BDR member companies include Adient, Apple, Avis Budget Group, Bank of America, Boeing, CDW, Comcast/NBCUniversal Media, Cummins, CVS Health, Dell, Exelon, Honda North America, Johnson & Johnson, JPMorgan Chase, Kaiser-Permanente, Kroger, Merck, Microsoft, Pacific Gas and Electric, Procter & Gamble and Toyota Motor North America.

Based on preliminary 2020 data, the average spend with diverse suppliers of BDR member companies was \$2.8 billion.



Dallas/Fort Worth
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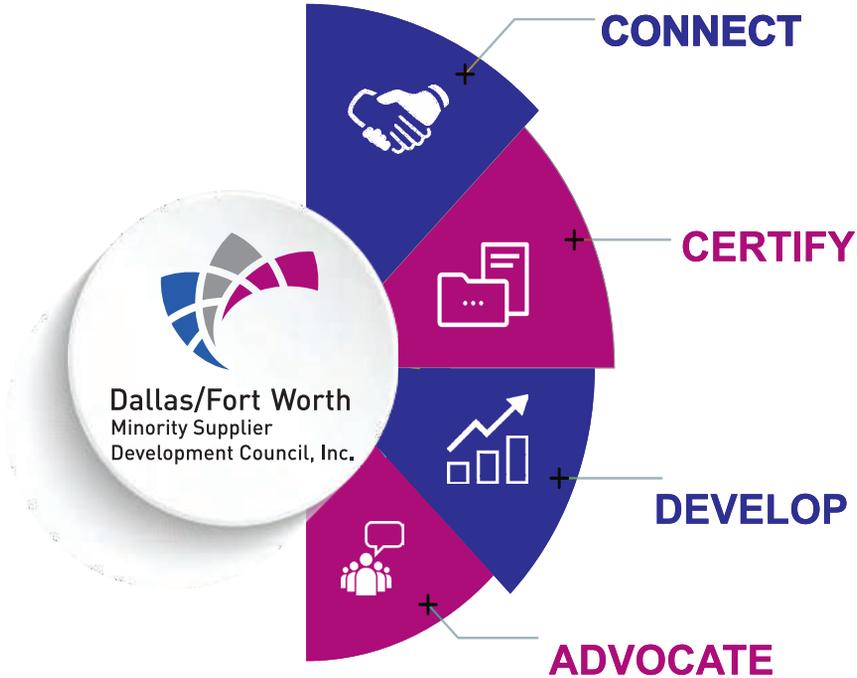
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Interventions

Rare funding helping Kanarys strengthen workplace DEI **BY M.V. GREENE**



Mandy Price, co-founder and CEO, Kanarys Inc.

Rarified air. That is a perfect description of Kanarys Inc., a technology company of Black founders that lifts organizations by providing software and tools to address emerging workforce challenges surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI.

Entrepreneur and Kanarys co-founder and CEO Mandy Price launched the Dallas-based startup, along with her two co-founders, Star Carter and Bennie King, in 2018. They received their first infusion of highly elusive venture capital funding in 2020. As the recipient of venture backing, Kanarys indeed embodies rarified air, especially considering that diverse business owners face overwhelming obstacles in the scramble to obtain financing of any kind to grow their companies.

Meanwhile, Black women founders receive an even more minuscule piece of the venture capital pie — in which private equity investors provide capital to companies with high-growth potential in exchange for equity stakes.

Statistics show that all Black founders historically have received less than 1% of available venture capital dollars. According to Crunchbase Inc. — which aggregates investment data and information on global companies — a record \$147 billion in venture capital was invested in U.S. startups through the first half of this year. Crunchbase research noted that venture dollars invested with Black firms has increased since 2019, but still only about 1.2% of that \$147 billion went to all Black founders and 0.34% to Black women founders.

“There is a huge disparity when it comes to Black founders receiving funding,” Price said. “It is a big challenge. There are many, many entrepreneurs who have talented teams and great ideas, but are not funded.”

Kanarys was fortunate enough to close on a \$3 million round of venture funding earlier this year, led by Zeal Capital Partners LLC that also included investors Revolution’s Rise of the Rest Seed Fund; Morgan Stanley; 100 Black Angels and Allies Fund; Segal Ventures; Portfolia Rising America and Rackhouse Ventures, according to the company. The round — which is being used

to advance product features and accelerate sales and marketing among various initiatives — increased to \$4.6 million in seed funding overall that Kanarys has received since its founding.

Kanarys approached the funding market by targeting so-called “inclusive investors” who have a vision corresponding to that of the company. While noting that the business case for DEI has been built out for decades, Price said that two seminal events during 2020 — the George Floyd social injustice protests and the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic — exposed how badly organizations were faring with issues around workplace DEI.

Before 2020, many potential investors did not understand “the vision of what we were trying to create. A lot of them have now. They’ve seen the shift that has happened with respected companies and corporations focusing on DEI,” Price said.

Many venture investors failed to see the market for DEI and challenges in the workplace for women, people of color, LGBTQ+ and other underrepresented groups, she said. “We’ve had to approach fundraising very differently. We wanted to be with investors that understand the market, the opportunity and the change we are trying to create in the world.”

Price’s personal and professional brand are as much the story of Kanarys as anything else. Growing up in Texas, she always had an abiding interest in issues involving racial and social justice. For example, at the University of Texas at Austin — where she received her undergraduate degree — she served as a member of the school’s Task Force on Racial Respect and Fairness.

On top of that, she is a Harvard Law School-trained lawyer, receiving her juris doctor in 2006. She focused her research interest on social justice issues, including service on Harvard’s Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review, which is widely viewed as the nation’s leading progressive law journal. After graduation, she moved into the divergent field of private equity and worked for more than a decade in Big Law — large, high-revenue law firms usually located in major U.S. cities — before establishing



We’ve had to approach fundraising very differently. We wanted to be with investors that understand the market, the opportunity and the change we are trying to create in the world.

— Mandy Price

Kanarys, giving her a heads up on how founders attract venture dollars.

CREATING LONG-TERM, SYSTEMIC CHANGES AROUND DEI CHALLENGE

Price formed Kanarys with her Harvard classmate Star Carter, who serves as chief operating officer and general counsel, and husband Bennie King, the company's chief product officer, both of whom also received their undergraduate degrees from the University of Texas at Austin.

Carter had worked as a corporate attorney before the founding, and King worked at a large pharmaceutical company. All three founders felt the sting of issues with inclusion at previous jobs, Price said.

"A lot of the inspiration behind Kanarys came from us working in the workplace. We really have the passion and drive for the company based on our own experiences. Our experiences were not isolated. These were experiences that many other Black employees held in the workplace," she said.

The genesis of the company's name comes from a former coal mining industry tradition, where miners would take canaries into the mines as a means for detecting carbon monoxide and other odorless toxic gases that could hurt humans. If gases were present, they would kill the canary, warning the miners to get back above ground. The founders chose the name Kanarys to serve as a "canary in the workplace" to help organizations detect DEI issues in their workplaces.



■ Bennie King, Mandy Price and Star Carter, co-founders, Kanarys Inc.

Price said that before the fundamental shifts in 2020 with the protests and pandemic, organizations tended to focus their diversity efforts primarily around talent acquisition but failed to ensure that DEI principles were rooted within the business as a priority. Implementing initiatives such as employee resource groups and unconscious bias training was hardly enough, she said.

Currently as critical as ever for business success, more employees are fervent in their demand that corporate organizations have a plan to address DEI — or they won't work for them, Price noted.

This attitude is especially acute in Generation Z, those younger workers born after 1997. Living Facts, a research publication of The Pew Charitable Trusts, says 67 million Americans are part of this group and are the most racially and ethnically diverse of all generations, with 48% identifying themselves as nonwhite.

Another workplace research organization, Glassdoor Inc., noted in its Diversity & Inclusion Workplace Survey from September 2020 that 76% of employees and job seekers surveyed said that a diverse workforce is a key factor when evaluating companies and job offers. In addition, nearly half of African American and Hispanic employees and job seekers responded that they have quit a job after witnessing or experiencing discrimination at work, according to the Glassdoor survey.

"Companies must have [DEI] as a focus or they will not be able to retain workers. They cannot be an employer of choice if they're not paying attention to the issues that their employees care about," Price said. ■

Companies must have [DEI] as a focus or they will not be able to retain workers. They cannot be an employer of choice if they're not paying attention to the issues that their employees care about.

— Mandy Price

Kanarys' business mission is to provide organizations the tools needed to create long-term, systemic changes around DEI challenges, offering benchmarking and data designed to uncover what Price described as DEI blind spots within the organization. Unless DEI is data-driven and transparent, strategies won't be precise or enduring, according to her.

Kanarys is certified by National Minority Supplier Development Council Inc. as a minority business enterprise. Yum! Brands, Dallas Mavericks and Neiman Marcus are among its current clients.

Besides talent acquisition, DEI through data collection and analysis also needs to encapsulate practices like employee retention, performance management and pay practices across the entirety of the corporate enterprise, including regions, divisions and departments that may have different DEI challenges, according to her. "We help them have precise and measurable interventions based on data, so they are not just guessing which programs and initiatives are needed," she said.

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT KANARYS, VISIT [KANARYS.COM](https://www.kanarys.com).



Nimble and growing

Whitlock Building Services thrives through pandemic **BY M.V. GREENE**

Small businesses can make or break themselves when market conditions change, or disruptions occur. Surviving change often comes down to being nimble by pivoting business strategy when necessary to accommodate the needs of customers. Adapt, and you can win business and grow. Fail to adapt, and you may hit the skids.

The leaders of Whitlock Building Services LLC understand very well what it means for a business to be nimble. The company is an African American-owned commercial janitorial and construction cleaning company based in Grapevine, Texas, in the greater Dallas market. The company was founded in 2007 and is operated by husband-and-wife Bruce and Regina Whitlock.

Along their business journey, the Whitlocks — both seasoned corporate executives before founding the company — have been keen to follow opportunities that keep the company thriving. At one point, the company focused on servicing residential and restaurant accounts, but moved to the more robust commercial and construction cleaning segment.

In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Whitlock Building Services lost many large accounts when office buildings closed, and workers were sent home. However, the company was able to survive amid the pandemic that uprooted everything in society by boldly adding to its portfolio COVID-free cleaning solutions that clients desperately needed.

“We lost 15 accounts in a two-week period,” Bruce Whitlock recalled. “Customers suspended or eliminated services or closed their offices. That in and of itself was unsettling, but we didn’t have much time to think about things that were unsettling because other customers wanted more disinfectant services.”

WORTH THE PIVOT

In the year since the beginning of COVID, Whitlock Building Services — instead of being despondent over lost accounts — saw its revenue increase by more than 111%, Regina Whitlock said. The company, she said, expects to increase revenue by more than



▶ Bruce and Regina Whitlock, co-founders, Whitlock Building Services LLC

\$1 million during 2021.

To build its credentials in disinfecting services, the company gained certification through an organization called the Global Biorisk Advisory Council, a division of ISSA — The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association. This certification ensured its employees were trained in the finer points of cleaning, disinfection and infectious disease prevention for biohazards like the novel coronavirus.

Regina Whitlock — who previously worked in sales and marketing in the office products segment before the founding of Whitlock Building Services — said the GBAC certification signifies the company's approach to the marketplace.

“Our strategy now — with people coming back into work — is to help our clients bring their customers and employees back to a safe environment where everyone feels safe. We're really trying to be a value-add and not just your janitorial vendor. We really want to be a partner with a full range of services that's all encompassing,” she said.

In addition to janitorial services, for example, Whitlock Building Services include post-construction cleaning, sanitation, disinfectant services; with the planning, knowledge and processes needed to respond to a

“Our strategy now — with people coming back into work — is to help our clients bring their customers and employees back to a safe environment where everyone feels safe. We're really trying to be a value-add and not just your janitorial vendor.”

— Regina Whitlock, co-founder, Whitlock Building Services LLC

biohazard crisis in the workplace, landscaping and handyman services through trusted partners.

“Anything that deals with the building, we want to be their eyes and ears and help them protect that asset,” Regina Whitlock added. “We're taking on that whole functionality, so [clients] can focus on their core businesses.”

While business metrics and strategy are paramount, Bruce Whitlock said the company's success and longevity is rooted in its ability to maintain a vibrant workforce and partnerships. It does so through a uniquely comprehensive approach to its people. The company has 63 employees and works with nine other janitorial companies who serve as subcontractors.

“When you think about success in a ser-

vice business, it's all about the people. It's a people business. Success is the ability to hire, train and retain excellent people,” said Bruce Whitlock, whose background is in executive management and operations in the office products and restaurant segments.

He said Whitlock Building Services will often bring in associates and partners who may have difficult backgrounds and experiences, including some of the small cleaning firms the company works with.

“You are encouraging, you're coaching and you're driving training and development. It's an emotional connection. The excitement is taking them on the journey,” Bruce Whitlock said.

He said he anticipates continued success for the company going forward as a sustainable business because of the firm's approach to service.

“Our service mindset is always yes. Yes, we can do it. Yes, we can handle that. We want to be good partners. We just kind of cover you with services,” Bruce Whitlock said. ■

“When you think about success in a service business, it's all about the people. It's a people business. Success is the ability to hire, train and retain excellent people.”

— Bruce Whitlock, co-founder, Whitlock Building Services

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHITLOCK BUILDING SERVICES, VISIT WHITLOCKSERVICES.COM.

Unity is the root — diversity is the fruit *(continued from page 44)*

“Our superpower is the technology we've developed over time that unifies people in less than 60 days,” said Gandara, whose coaching strategy helped Coast Properties build an excellent culture using four key benchmarks: set and achieve goals, self-actualization, respect and value people, and unity. “Not only did they get a 225% return on their investment, but they won awards for best places to work and diversity, and they didn't even have a diversity strategy.”

When you understand unity that celebrates diversity you can hire people because they are team players and excellent at what they do, not because of their gen-

der or ethnicity. As companies begin to value winning through unity that celebrates diversity as their highest cultural priority diversity occurs naturally as a direct result because you can't win without it.

“Winning organizations are fast, mobile, quick to change, diverse, highly motivated, totally unified teams that hate losing and love to win,” said Gandara. “Unity is the root; diversity is the fruit. When you miss unity and only focus on diversity you get chaos instead of success. Just remember UCB, www.UnityCelebratesDiversity.com, and you'll be good to go.” ■

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EXCELLENT CULTURES, VISIT EXCELLENTCULTURES.COM.



Diversity. Inclusion. Delivered



Ying McGuire reflects on first 100 days as NMSDC's CEO and president

Journey to \$1 trillion for NMSDC-certified MBEs



Ying McGuire, CEO and president, National Minority Supplier Development Council Inc.



I am excited to partner with you to tackle the BHAG (big, hairy, audacious goal) of growing NMSDC-certified MBE revenue to \$1 trillion.

— Ying McGuire

This [Nov. 23 marked] 100 days since I took on the role of CEO and President of NMSDC. People continue to ask me if I am still glad that I took on this role. I say other than dealing with wall-to-wall meetings, I feel I have truly found my calling! Many thanks to our team, the board, our MBEs, corporate members, our regional affiliate councils, and our strategic partners for reinforcing my decision to lead this organization rich with a long history and great opportunities.

Many of you reached out to me with one question: what is the future for NMSDC? My first thought was NMSDC's next 50 years should be defined by all our stakeholders vested in the future of the minority businesses, racial wealth gap closure, and well-being of our society. Therefore, my approach has been to listen to all of you intently, not only with my mind but also with my heart. I have drawn tremendous wisdom and energy from those honest dialogues with you. Looking at the NMSDC world through the lens of our stakeholders has been a transformational experience for me.

In my various listening sessions, I always ended my conversation with the same question: if you had a magic wand and could change one thing to make NMSDC more successful, what would it be? The answer to this question helps us prioritize and focus. The most common response by far from our stakeholders is technology enablement — I could not have agreed more: upgrading technologies should be our top priority; there is no leadership without technology leadership. However, my 100-day discoveries also highlighted the need to prioritize our people and culture to make the most of this technological advancement initiative. Peter Drucker once said: "culture eats strategy for breakfast."

Three weeks ago, with the in-kind contribution of one of our newest corporate members, Heidrick & Struggle, we conducted NMSDC's first culture assessment. The results were humbling and eye-opening. As a result, I am personally committed

to owning and driving a collaborative and high-performance culture at our national office and will foster the same spirit and practices for the entire network.

Last week, the executive team at the national office had a strategy retreat where we began drafting a five-year roadmap and 2022 plan based on your input and the EY study. In addition, we started designing a high-performance organizational structure and establishing priorities for our 50th anniversary year to build momentum for the next 50 years. We most definitely have our work cut out for us: 2022 will see us shake up the status quo, elevate the minority business agenda to the CEO level and policymakers, build and empower a strong team and drive a winning culture, adopt new technologies, build cohesion in the network, advance the NMSDC brand, and launch a "50 for 50" Capital Campaign to create an endowment for the future of minority businesses.

As we look ahead to 2022 and our 50th anniversary, please mark your calendars for our signature events which promise to be like no other, scheduled for:

- Leadership Series: May (TBD)
- Program Managers Seminar: July (TBD)
- Annual Conference + BOE: Late October/Early November

I will continue to host weekly "Huddle with Ying" sessions to meet many of you across our network.

I feel proud of what NMSDC has achieved and the challenges we have conquered over the past 50 years. No other FOR IMPACT organization can match what we have accomplished: \$400 billion annual economic output, \$2.2 million jobs created or sustained, and \$48 billion revenue for tax authorities. However, we have not nearly reached our full potential. I am excited to partner with you to tackle the BHAG (big, hairy, audacious goal) of growing NMSDC-certified MBE revenue to \$1 trillion. As the old saying goes, "if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together". Please join me on this journey to 1 trillion! ■

HMSDC Delivers Value.

The Houston Minority Supplier Development Council (HMSDC) is a vital link between major corporations and minority business enterprises (MBEs). Each year, member corporations have reported over \$23 billion spent with council-certified minority business enterprises.

\$23.2B

ECONOMIC PRODUCTION

82.3K

TOTAL JOBS SUPPORTED

39.3K

JOBS AT CERTIFIED MBEs

\$4.7B

WAGES EARNED THROUGH JOBS



Houston

Minority Supplier
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DFW MSDC's Terri Quinton, Thomas Crowther, Francis Kamgang among honorees

NMSDC presents 2021 outstanding achievement awards

The National Minority Supplier Development Council Inc. recently held its annual Conference and Business Opportunity Exchange. Building on last year's all-virtual format, more unique opportunities for deep engagement and interactivity among attendees, exhibitors and keynote speakers were offered.

Conference attendees experienced an enhanced digital expo floor with real-time analytics, interactive chats, technology demos, daily morning fitness activities, and special musical and dance performances throughout the week.

Notable speakers included leadership from all minority chambers of commerce in addition to: Isabella Guzman, secretary of U.S. Small Business Administration; Pete Buttigieg, U.S. Secretary of Transportation; Robert F. Smith, chairman of Vista Equity Partners LLC; and Emily Chang, author and Bloomberg TV anchor and executive producer.

Jose Turkienicz, NMSDC chairman of the board, and UPS Inc. chief procurement, real

estate and global business and customer services officer, said this year's conference was "full of exciting ideas, bold conversations and new relationships that are all marked by our vision to enable MBEs for profitable growth."

The conference closed with NMSDC's prestigious awards gala, which celebrates the outstanding achievements of member corporations and minority business enterprises, as well as the most prominent individuals and companies in the field of minority business development.

"We celebrate these accomplishments, not to rest upon our laurels, but to look upon them as inspiration of the even greater progress and impact we will make as we move forward into our organization's 50th anniversary next year," said Ying McGuire, CEO and president of NMSDC. "It's my greatest pride to share the accomplishments of each awardee and my greatest hope to envision what is to come for MBEs nationwide as a result of the work we are doing right now."

The awardees for this year are:



Jose Turkienicz, chairman of the board, chief procurement, NMSDC, and real estate and global business services officer, UPS Inc.

PRESIDENT'S LEGACY AWARD

The President's Legacy Award recognizes individuals whose contributions the president has chosen to highlight because of their significant work toward minority business inclusion and supporting the vision of the NMSDC president and CEO in the past year.

This year's honorees are:



Clifford A. Bailey, president and CEO, TechSoft Systems Inc.



Terri Quinton, CEO, Q2 Marketing Group

HARRIET R. MICHEL CHAIRMAN'S AWARD

The Harriet R. Michel Chairman's Award recognizes individuals who are trailblazers in advancing the economic inclusion, development and advancement of minority business.

This award had two recipients:



Ralph G. Moore, CPA, president, RGMA & Associates Inc.



Robert J. Halter, C.P.M., executive director, purchasing services and supplier diversity

SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR

The Supplier of the Year awards recognizes Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American business enterprises for their business growth and development, operational success, support of other minority businesses and active participation in the community.



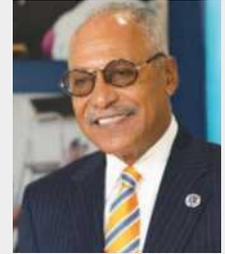
Class I: Under \$1 million in revenue
Jim Roberts Enterprises LLC;
Jim Roberts, president and CEO



Class II: \$1 to \$10 million in revenue
DSI Telecom Inc., dba F2G
Solutions; **Francis Kamgang**, CEO



Class III: \$10 to \$50 million in revenue
The Crowther Group LLC;
Thomas Crowther, LEED AP,
CEO and managing partner



Class IV: Over \$50 million in revenue
SEEL LLC; **Louis E. James**,
president and CEO

CORPORATION OF THE YEAR

The Corporation of the Year award recognizes a select number of national corporate members for their exemplary achievements in minority supplier inclusion. This award is regarded as the most significant honor to a major corporation for the utilization of ethnic minority-owned — Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American — suppliers.



FIFTH THIRD BANK

Class I: Gross annual revenues less than \$10 billion
Fifth Third Bank



Class II: Gross annual revenue between \$11 billion and \$50 billion
DTE Energy



Class III: Gross annual revenues between \$51 billion and \$100 billion
IBM Corp.



Class IV: Gross annual revenues between \$101 billion and \$150 billion
Ford Motor Co.



Class V: Gross annual revenues greater than \$150 billion
Apple Inc.

COUNCIL OF THE YEAR

This award recognizes an exemplary affiliate council demonstrating the programs, activities and accomplishments which establishes it as a model of organization, operation and success. The affiliate council is reviewed for image, accomplishments, activities and leadership over the previous calendar year.

This year's recipient is the Western Regional Minority Supplier Development Council. Cecil Plummer is president and CEO.



Cecil Plummer, president and CEO,
Western Regional Minority Supplier
Development Council



Western Regional
Minority Supplier
Development Council

SAVE THE DATE

Next year's conference is one of deep significance, as NMSDC will celebrate its 50th anniversary. The conference will be held using a hybrid model of in person and streaming in New Orleans, Louisiana, Oct. 31 - Nov. 3, 2022.





Who's got next?

Succession planning vital for future success of MBEs **BY MELISSA LOWERY**

Entrepreneurs and small-business owners are the backbone of the American economy. They pour their blood, sweat and tears into starting and growing businesses. But amid the excitement and sacrifice of building something of their own, often planning for the business' next generation is ignored.

According to the National Association of Corporate Directors, fewer than one in four private company boards say they have a formal succession plan in place. Those numbers are even lower for minority-owned businesses.

Stephanie E. DeVane, vice president of entrepreneurship and business development at the National Urban League, asserted that the value of succession planning goes beyond the business owner's legacy; it is vital to the economic success of communities.

"Succession planning is the best way to ensure that a business has the best people with the right skills and experience in place to lead it for future success," she said. "For Black-owned businesses, it's even more critical — in order to preserve mainstays of these communities and thus, continue to build and maintain Black jobs and create wealth."

A business without a succession plan risks disruption, uncertainty and conflict, along with endangering future competitiveness. For companies that are family-owned or -controlled, the issue of succession also introduces deeply emotional personal issues and may widen the circle of stakeholders to include nonemployee family members.

In the next decade, we will see substantial transfers of wealth through business ownership handoffs across generations and other new ownership structures as the younger baby boomers and older Gen Xers retire. The long-term survival of those businesses — and the preservation of the wealth they have built — hinges on succession planning.

STABILITY AND CONTINUITY

Any business owner knows that success is built on continuity, from standard operating procedures for creating their products or

services to building relationships with clients and customers to retaining top talent. Succession planning is about long-term continuity, ensuring that a business continues to survive and grow after the founder departs.

Lamont Robinson, director of supplier diversity at pharmaceutical giant AmerisourceBergen Corp., spoke from the corporate procurement angle, noting that suppliers actively pursuing succession plans are more attractive than those leaving the future up to chance.

"You don't want to dedicate resources to develop diverse suppliers only to have that go away because they didn't have succession plans," he said.

But minority business enterprises without established succession plans are not automatically precluded from doing business with a company like AmerisourceBergen. In the interest of building a strong, diverse supply chain, Robinson said he and his colleagues at other large companies can help diverse suppliers with that part of business development.

"Corporations like ours have the resources internally or via partners to help [suppliers] develop succession plans," he said. "At AmerisourceBergen, if you are wanting to grow strategically with us, we are open. We want to prepare you to do business with others in health care. The more successful you are, the better it is for all of us."

Competition is necessary for a robust economy, and diverse small businesses are vital to competition. Tom Sharbaugh, a law professor and director of the Entrepreneur Assistance Clinic at Penn State Law, noted the impact when small businesses are purchased by outsiders.

"The buyers of many family-owned and privately-owned businesses are private equity funds that often close recently acquired businesses by merging their operations into other companies in their portfolios," he said. "This [merging] results in significant community disruption as jobs are moved and factories, warehouses and other facilities are closed."

The loss of MBEs can have a tremendous



Stephanie E. DeVane, vice president of entrepreneurship and business development, National Urban League



Lamont Robinson, director, supplier diversity, AmerisourceBergen Corp.

negative impact on a community through loss of tax revenue, loss of community involvement such as sponsorship of youth sports and cultural events, youth moving away seeking better opportunities and the erosion of the community culture itself. In addition to succession planning for MBEs, Sharbaugh proposed a solution that maintains stability within the community, while also increasing minority business ownership.

“Communities could reduce this disruption by promoting the transfer of ownership to local minority entrepreneurs through such efforts as favorable financing, preferred supplier arrangements and business mentoring,” he said.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Small-business owners are often focused on the short- and near-term, working toward meeting client needs and achieving year-over-year growth. Succession planning can seem like something for the distant future — a promising idea but not as urgent as filling that next order and developing that next product.

But what if something happens to you, the business owner, which prevents you from leading your company? Or a life change occurs, changing the family dynamics?

“No one plans for the day a death or disability or even divorce will turn a business upside down,” said Eido Walny, founder/managing attorney of Walny Legal Group LLC, an estate planning boutique law firm in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to PNC Financial Services Group Inc. earlier this year. “So, the best time to plan for those events is well before they become a reality. That is especially true if there are multiple owners in the business. You want to plan so that you are not accidental partners with someone’s ex-spouse or even their children.”

Robinson of AmerisourceBergen agrees, both as someone with 17 years of experience in procurement and as a small-business owner himself. “You owe it to your employees to have a succession plan,” he said.

A succession plan means you have control over what happens to your company, including your employees, whether the transition comes after decades of successful leadership on your part or in an emergency.

GENERATIONAL WEALTH

Business ownership is one of the cornerstones of building generational wealth. In

a white paper titled “Bridging the Divide: How Business Ownership Can Help Close the Racial Wealth Gap,” Joyce Klein, director of Business Ownership Initiative at The Aspen Institute Inc., wrote that “In recent years, entrepreneurship has shown to be a potential means to address the racial wealth gap — both because of the apparent relationship between business ownership and wealth and because of the opportunities for higher levels of wealth and wealth mobility for Black entrepreneurs.”

However, in a brief published in March 2021 titled “Small business ownership and liquid wealth,” researchers at JPMorgan Chase & Co. noted that business ownership alone does not guarantee wealth for Black and Latinx entrepreneurs. The obstacles many minorities face when starting a new business — especially lack of access to capital — often lead to business closure in less than three years.

“Encouraging new small business starts alone may not close the liquid wealth gap, and policies that support small businesses should consider differences in the liquid wealth available to small-business owners,” the researchers conclude.

The success rate for new businesses is low, and for minorities, that rate is even lower compared to the success rate for existing businesses. With a record number of baby-boomer-owned businesses transferring ownership in the next decade, Penn State’s Sharbaugh sees an opportunity to build generational wealth for minorities.

“Although startups receive a lot of attention as a way of increasing minority ownership and economic development, the yield may be greater with a program to pass ownership to minority entrepreneurs when the existing owners of family-owned and other privately owned businesses decide that it is time to sell their businesses,” he said. “The large financial institutions that have announced their interest in pouring tens of millions of dollars into promoting minority business enterprises could use those funds to provide favorable financing for transferring ownership of existing businesses.”

Whatever form your succession plan takes, economists, financial and legal advisers and business owners all agree: The time to develop and implement the plan is now. Not only are you protecting your legacy, but also you are building generational wealth for your family and your community. ■



■ Tom Sharbaugh, law professor and director of the Entrepreneur Assistance Clinic, Penn State Law



■ Eido Walny, founder/managing attorney, Walny Legal Group LLC



The Wilkins Group leadership team includes (from left) President (and heir apparent) Tomeka Herod, CEO Tom Wilkins and sole owner Faye Wilkins.

Planning the successor's successor

The Wilkins Group's succession plan in works from Day One **BY MELISSA LOWERY**

Tom Wilkins always intended his eponymous company to stay in the family. When he founded The Wilkins Group Inc. in 1986, he did so with a long-term goal of creating generational wealth.

"If dollars and cents is all you want to do, then you go out and find investors, then take some of the money and run off to the Caribbean or wherever people go," he said. "That's not what I wanted. From the beginning, the intent was to be a multigenerational, family-run company. Everybody who was eating and breathing — if they're associated with the family — began putting in their time, starting in elementary school."

Based in Richardson, Texas, The Wilkins Group is a telecom service provider for wireless, wireline, broadband, cloud computing and more throughout the lower 48 states. From building infrastructure to maintaining established systems to providing emergency service, the company's technical and managerial expertise keeps people and businesses connected across the country.

WAIT. WHAT?

Wilkins started the company the day his daughter Angela graduated from high school and hired her as his first employee.

She managed her father and about 10 other employees out in the field — "road dogs" — for two years before moving on to other opportunities. Wilkins is pragmatic about her choice not to work for the family business.

"You can't go in assuming that someone who looks like you and feels like you wants to do what you did," he said. "[Succession] has to be natural, not forced. If you try to over orchestrate it, then you're facing two battles."

Today Wilkins retains the title of CEO, but stepdaughter Tomeka Herod is the one in charge of day-to-day operations as president of The Wilkins Group.

“Ninety percent of what happens in the business goes through her,” he said.

Herod joined the company in 1997 after earning a master’s degree from Southern Methodist University and working as the executive assistant to former Texas Railroad Commissioner Michael Williams. She will assume the role of CEO when Wilkins eventually retires.

In the meantime, The Wilkins Group continues to evolve alongside telecommunications technology and needs, while continuing to provide the foundational services that remain unchanging. He pointed out that even as technology advances, the basics of building and testing remain the same.

“No matter what happens in the cloud, there’s X amount of work that doesn’t happen in the cloud that has to be done,” Wilkins said. “You may relabel it, but the basics are the same. Whether you’re digging a ditch to lay fiber or phone lines, the machine doesn’t care what’s going in the ditch; it just wants to dig the ditch.”

A certified minority business enterprise, The Wilkins Group is committed to partnering with other MBEs and hiring a diverse workforce. Herod connected partnering with minorities to one of the company’s core goals — narrowing the digital divide.

“As an MBE, we employ minorities on the forefront of putting in communications systems that then narrow the digital divide,” she said. “We believe that the people in the field who install services the carriers promise should be from those same communities. It’s about putting communities in charge of their own communications.”

Wilkins describes the company as “a matriarch-type business,” with women filling leadership roles from the senior level through management.

“Several people here — mainly women

— have been with the organization well over 20 years, and that’s not an accident,” he said. “Longevity was our first goal, and it happened that women were the best fit for many of those positions. As we grew as a company, women’s positions became more prominent.”

In fact, in addition to being an MBE, The Wilkins Group is a certified women’s business enterprise. Faye Wilkins, Herod’s mother, has been intimately involved in operations since 1990, and in 1992, she became sole owner. She currently serves as chief financial officer, as she prepares to transition ownership to Herod. Building a successful multigenerational business requires unconditional dedication, she noted.

“It has not been easy staying the course of building a business that will last more than one generation, especially when working with family members,” Faye Wilkins said. “I’ve learned to separate the two as best as possible. Business issues must stay behind at the end of the day. And by the same token, we must focus on making sure the Wilkins legacy continues. No longer is it profits before family or family before profits; both have been balanced.”

PLANNING THE SUCCESSOR’S SUCCESSOR

Meanwhile, even as Herod prepares to assume full control of the company, she is already considering who might be the right fit to succeed her.

“We have other women who put in blood, sweat and tears in the Wilkins Group, and I’m looking at them to put in my succession plan,” she said. “Whoever I see rise, I will start to mold them.” ■

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WILKINS GROUP, VISIT WILKINS.COM.



From the beginning, the intent was to be a multi-generational, family-run company. Everybody who was eating and breathing, if they’re associated with the family, began putting in their time starting in elementary school.

— Tom Wilkins, founder and CEO, The Wilkins Group

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Slowing down ... not yet

Rosa Santana's succession plan preserves vision, values **BY MELISSA LOWERY**

When Rosa Santana launched her first business in 2002, staffing service Integrated Human Capital, or IHC she quickly realized she needed help with her rapidly growing endeavor. She turned to her eldest daughter, Lisa Navarro-Gonzales, who had experience in the staffing industry and helped set up the back office. A few years later, after graduating from college, youngest daughter Nicole Navarro-Velesiotis joined the family business.

Today, the Santana Group includes a portfolio of companies offering outsourcing solutions in the United States and Mexico. Both of Santana's daughters serve as vice presidents; Navarro-Gonzales is general manager of Forma Automotive LLC — the first Hispanic woman-owned direct Tier I supplier to Toyota — while Navarro-Velesiotis oversees IHC's and Oveana's U.S. operations.

"The nice thing is that they're pretty much running the businesses day-to-day," Santana said of her daughters. "They're my business partners now. I'm still the ultimate decision-maker and the relationship holder with the major clients, but my daughters have equal access to all the clients."

Although mother and daughters have worked together for almost two decades, Santana said formalizing a succession plan only became a priority a couple of years ago.

"We had an informal plan, I guess you could say, because everyone knew their role, but in 2019, senior leadership started discussing what we need to get to the next level, so we engaged external consultants to help us create a strategic plan," Santana said.

Part of that strategic plan includes succession planning for when Santana decides to "slow down" — an idea that the energetic, driven CEO is just beginning to consider.

"We've grown very fast and very nicely, but to go to the next level and beyond — including when I elect to slow down and potentially retire — we must have a better and more formal plan to ensure that there is continuity in our strategy and growth of the businesses," she said. "I haven't thought about slowing down for a long time, but I realized that it's easier to do this kind of planning while you're still entrenched in the business."

The pandemic shifted priorities and slowed down the planning process, but Santana sees that as a blessing in disguise.

"Since COVID, things have changed dramatically; what we do is so different, and that gave us the opportunity to realign our goals and the future of the Santana Group," she said.

Innovation and excellence have always been priorities for The Santana Group, but never at the expense of people. As a certified woman-owned and minority-owned business, inclusion is a built into every facet of the company.

In 2020, Forma Automotive received the Minority Business Development Agency's National Distinguished Supplier Diversity Award, marking the first time in history that a minority- and woman-owned firm was named a recipient. Previously, this award has been presented to organizations such as Coca-Cola, BP and Home Depot.

(continued on page 72)



Rosa Santana, founder and CEO, Santana Group



The nice thing is that they're [my daughters] pretty much running the businesses day-to-day. They're my partners. I'm still the ultimate decision-maker and the relationship holder with the major clients, but my daughters have equal access to all the clients.

— Rosa Santana



Major corporation, major mandate

Major corporations need to support large MBEs to help save low-income communities **BY JAMES H. LOWRY**

As I have shared in previous articles, I genuinely believe the CEOs of major corporations are sincere in wanting to assist minority business enterprises or MBEs grow. I have been in board rooms where the same CEOs admonished their top executives for not achieving their own stretch internal minority and women spend goals. However, after the meetings are over, programs are designed and monies are allocated, there is limited progress on both local and national levels. Over the years — in my many reports and books — I have provided in-depth analyses on why this limited progress has occurred. But recently, after being immersed in many of these programs and reflecting on the events of 2020, I have concluded the biggest reasons are:

1. Most corporations perceive MBE development with a philanthropic mindset.
2. Top corporate management is conflicted with respect to what targeted groups to assist — small, large or potential large businesses.

In the remainder of this article, I will address each one of these problem areas and make recommendations on how corporations can achieve ambitious goals for both small and potentially large MBEs.

MOST CORPORATIONS PERCEIVE MBE DEVELOPMENT WITH A PHILANTHROPIC MINDSET

When the first major MBE programs were designed in the 60s, they were created in times of urban riots, corporate distrust, economic decline and high unemployment rates, particularly in Black and Brown communities. In response to these conditions, many programs were designed quickly within government agencies and corporations.

Over a 60-year period, many of these programs have been redefined, grown and, in many cases, discarded. There have been good intentions, but the programs were not designed, supported and driven with the similar corporate focus of profit-driven projects. Thus, they had limited success and have not

had a major impact on the social injustice they originally identified e.g., limited economic development, reduction of crime, lack of jobs, poor health conditions, weak education programs and high unemployment.

Upon reflection, I strongly feel if top executives within corporate America had attacked the opportunity of advancing MBE development the same way they did when they were faced with problems in maintaining market share, global competition and driving government policy, the results would have been different after 60 years. The basic rules of the game should have been:

1. Establish your overall minority business goals to achieve parity by the year 2000.
2. Define the five to seven critical steps to achieve the goals.
3. Allocate the required capital and resources to achieve the goals.
4. Assign your top executives to design the plan.
5. Monitor success by utilizing business metrics.
6. Reward the deserving executives for positive results or demote or fire them for negative results.

Let's assume if this simple formula had been followed by the Fortune 100 starting in 1961, we might not have achieved parity, but we would have achieved greater success and our urban areas would have been stronger.

TOP CORPORATE MANAGEMENT IS CONFLICTED WITH RESPECT TO WHAT TARGETED GROUPS TO ASSIST

I accept that most of these minority businesses in the United States are small and play a significant role in the U.S. economy. And we all witnessed the same small businesses owned by Black and Brown people have been suffering disproportionately during this COVID-19 pandemic. These companies should be helped — quickly and dramatically. Even with substantial and immediate help, *(continued on page 72)*



James H. Lowry



Major change in low-income urban and rural communities will only occur when many midsize and large businesses are owned by minorities.

— James H. Lowry



Succession planning is important for every business, but it's particularly critical for MBEs and WBEs to have someone in your organization to continue to live your values, to drive your vision. Often, we're afraid of hiring people that are better than us, but I'll tell you what, it's the best thing we can do.

— Rosa Santana, founder and CEO, The Santana Group

Slowing down ... not yet

(continued from page 70)

Santana is rightfully proud of such achievements like this, and part of her succession planning is to ensure the values on which she built her company on continue to drive The Santana Group in the future.

"Succession planning is important for every business, but it's particularly critical for MBEs and WBEs to have someone in your organization to continue to live your values, to drive your vision," she said. "Often we're afraid of hiring people that are better or more qualified than we are but I'll tell you what, it's the best thing we can do. If you engage and compensate them appropriately, those are the leaders who believe in and drive your vision and continuously improve upon it to create more value in everything you do."

She counts herself fortunate to have daughters who are firmly entrenched in the family business and committed to the vision they created together.

"To ensure that we protect our families and what we've worked so hard for, it's crit-



■ Santana Group's leadership team includes (from left) Lisa Navarro-Gonzales, Nicole Navarro-Velesiotis and Rosa Santana.

ical that we embark on a true planning for what happens to my business when I plan to exit," she said. "At the end of the day, one of my sayings is 'plan your work and work your plan'. It's time for us to put the bigger plan together and put that plan to work." ■

➔ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SANTANA GROUP, VISIT SANTANAGR.COM.

Major corporation, major mandate

(continued from page 71)

are these companies collectively stabilizing low-income communities, increasing employment dramatically, creating and finding founders capable of competing globally? We all know the answer to this question. The other question we must ask is should they receive support directly from big corporations? This responsibility should abdicate to government agencies and nonprofits. These two organizations are better able to:

1. Establish local markets.
2. Train MBEs.
3. Identify community development financial institutions or CDFIs.
4. Advocate for small business.
5. Design and execute training programs.

The biggest contributions corporations can make are funding nonprofits, ensuring quality service and keeping government mandates honest. Major corporations should focus on growing the biggest and most qualified MBEs. This growth will:

1. Position MBEs in global growth markets.
2. Facilitate joint ventures with minority and nonminority businesses.
3. Create spin-off divisions.
4. Urge large banks, foundations and individuals to invest in existing and potential MBEs.
5. Produce critical data and research.
6. Establish collective major societal goals.
7. Help train the next generation of Black and Brown CEOs.

MAJOR CORPORATION, MAJOR MANDATE

Major change in low-income urban and rural communities will only occur when many midsize and large businesses are owned by minorities. These companies will be able to provide jobs and viable subcontractor opportunities, elevate themselves within the U.S. economic system and create hope for our youth. Major corporations with a long-range view on economic development and business perspectives can be the catalyst for effecting this change. ■



The biggest contributions corporations can make are funding nonprofits, ensuring quality service and keeping government mandates honest. Major corporations should focus on growing the biggest and most qualified MBEs.

— James H. Lowry



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SAVE THE DATE FOR 2022!

February 24: Annual Stakeholders' Meeting/
MBE "Idol" Kickoff

March 23: Lunch & Learn MBEIC Event

April 22: Regional Task Force Workshop

May 12: MBE "Idol" Preliminaries
26: Lunch & Learn MBEIC Event

June 15-16: Premier Face Time Expo/
MBE "Idol" Semi-Finals

June 21: New Frontier Showcase

August 11: MBE "Idol" Finals

September 22: Diversity at the Border

November 17: Regional Task Force Event

December 8: Lunch & Learn MBEIC Event

www.smsdc.org



**Event dates are subject to change.
For the safety & health of our stakeholders,
all 2022 events will remain virtual.*

Appointments Announcements



➤ **Matt Greene** is purchasing senior manager, supplier diversity, at Toyota Motor North America Inc. A 19-year Toyota veteran, Greene previously was a Toyota purchasing manager for seats.



➤ **Katrice Hardy** is executive editor of the Dallas Morning News. She is the first woman and Black journalist to lead the newspaper. Previously, Hardy was executive editor of the Indianapolis Star and the Midwest regional editor for the USA Today Network. Under her leadership, in recent years, the Star and the Louisville Courier-Journal — both owned by Gannett, along with USA Today — earned Pulitzer Prizes.



➤ **Simone Ray** is director of supplier diversity at Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc. She is responsible for engaging, supporting and creating business opportunities for diverse suppliers. Previously, she was Hilton's senior manager, category management, operating supplies and equipment.



➤ **Annette Underwood** is chief diversity officer at Vistra Corp. She oversees all programs and initiatives that support the company's diversity program. Underwood is also a member of Vistra's Threat Assessment Team, working with corporate security and employment counsel to manage the company's Workplace Violence Prevention Program. Before her current role, Underwood was manager and director of employee relations, ensuring regulatory and corporate employee compliance across Vistra corporate and its subsidiaries.



➤ **Kristen J. Wells** is director of diversity and inclusion at Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc. She is responsible for driving and promoting the organization's diversity and inclusion strategy. Previously, she was Hilton's director of global brand communications.



➤ **DeShaun N. Wise Porter** is vice president and global head of diversity, inclusion and engagement at Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc. She is responsible for developing and executing holistic and integrated strategies that are aligned with Hilton's values. Previously, she was Hilton's vice president of HR Consulting.



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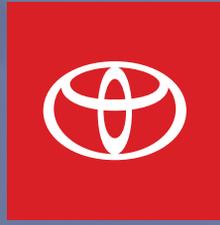
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