

**FCC Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment
Digital Empowerment and Inclusion Working Group**

Digital Empowerment Subgroup Report

Presented by:

Rudy Brioché, Comcast NBCUniversal, Chair, Digital Empowerment and Inclusion Working Group

Susan Au Allen, U.S. Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation, Co-Lead, Digital Empowerment Subgroup

S. Jenell Trigg, Lerman Senter PLLC, Co-Lead, Digital Empowerment Subgroup

Members:

Laura Berrocal, Charter Communications

Sindy Benavides, League of United Latin American Citizens

Shellie Blakeney, T-Mobile USA

Harin Contractor, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

Roy E. Litland, Verizon

Ian Skorodin, Barcid Foundation

Felicia West, Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia

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The Tech and Communications Diversity Opportunity Symposium and Virtual Fair held on Wednesday, April 28, 2021, were built on the success of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Tech Supplier Diversity Opportunity Showcase, which was held on Friday, October 23, 2020.¹ The Showcase provided the Digital Empowerment & Inclusion Working Group (DEI Working Group) and the Symposium Planning Committee with insights regarding the needs of Diverse Communications Businesses (DCBs), including a continuing need for traditional and non-traditional resources to access capital. DCBs also need support to access opportunities for training, employment, and mentorship, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant economic hardship.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

As part of the Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment (ACDDE) that was re-chartered in July 2019, one of the primary objectives of the DEI Working Group is to assist the FCC in continuing its longstanding supplier diversity outreach efforts to inform and educate DCBs on available resources, partnerships and opportunities, and best practices to enable DCB-owned or operated businesses to enter and/or grow in the information, communications and technology (ICT) sectors.

¹ Recording of the Showcase is on the FCC website – <https://www.fcc.gov/news-events/events/2020/10/tech-supplier-diversity-opportunity-showcase>.

DCBs are defined by the DEI Working Group as businesses (including entrepreneurs) at every stage of development or growth (new entrant, small, mid-sized, or large businesses) that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Small business under the U.S. Small Business Administration, a State Agency, or the FCC’s size standards;
- Women-Owned;
- Minority/Ethnic-Owned;
- LGBTQ-Owned;
- Veteran-Owned; or
- Disability-Owned.

Increased DCB participation and success in the ICT sector fulfills the FCC’s statutory obligations to promote the diversity of media voices, vigorous economic competition, and technological advancement. 47 USC § 257(b). Taking steps to facilitate diversity and increased competition in the ICT sector, and to identify and eliminate market entry barriers, especially for small businesses, is consistent with the FCC’s statutory obligations under Sections 309(j) and 163 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended. 47 USC §§ 309(j) and 163(a), (b) and (d)(3).

PLANNING

The Digital Empowerment Subgroup overcame numerous significant and dynamic challenges in working to meet these objectives during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the impacts on businesses overall, and especially many small and diverse businesses, were uncertain at any given time. Subgroup Co-Leads, Susan Au Allen and S. Jenell Trigg, engaged other members of the DEI Working Group, members of the Diversity in the Tech Sector Working Group with similar objectives to support small and diverse businesses, and several other stakeholders, including FCC staff. Many of these stakeholders comprised the Symposium Planning Committee. It was necessary for the Co-Leads to continuously reevaluate the planning efforts for both the 2020 Showcase and the 2021 Spring Symposium and Virtual Fair to ensure that the information provided was relevant, meaningful, and timely.

This ongoing reevaluation resulted in changing the name of the Spring Symposium, as it was evident that the DEI Working Group’s efforts to support DCBs involved more than just supplier diversity, although supplier diversity continues to be an important tool for business growth and a steady means of financial support. For this reason, the word “Supplier” was dropped from the title and “Diversity” overall was the main focus. Moreover, the Planning Committee purposefully included representatives from traditional communications companies as well as from technology companies to serve as speakers, and the Spring Symposium included a broad representation of all communications-related industries within the ICT sector, not just technology companies. Therefore, the event title was “Tech and Communications Diversity Opportunity Symposium.”

2021 SPRING SYMPOSIUM

The Symposium provided a wealth of new information and little-known resources for DCBs in the private sector and provided by local, state and federal governments, including traditional and non-traditional financial support; training, educational and consulting programs/initiatives; and mentoring, incubation and apprenticeship programs. Keynote speaker, The Honorable Edith Jett McCloud, Acting National Director of the Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce, delivered a passionate and inspiring assessment of the state of and importance of minority business to America's economic recovery post-pandemic, but also as a means to achieve even greater success in all industries. Director McCloud also highlighted some of the disparities and obstacles still prevalent and harmful to minority businesses, including minority women-owned businesses. One of her most memorable statements was that "diversity is not just a moral imperative but an economic tool."

Feedback from DCB attendees confirmed that they greatly appreciated not just the information and resources, but also the honest and refreshing discussion of the panelists regarding the issues and implementation of programs and initiatives that may negatively impact DCBs, and ideas of how to solve or work around such issues.

Following are details about the Symposium:

- 160 plus in attendance (230 registered online)
- 2,746,805 potential impacts for hashtag #FCCDiversity
- Opening remarks from Jessica Rosenworcel, Acting FCC Chairwoman
- Keynote Speaker, Edith Jett McCloud, Acting National Director, Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce
- 10 total panelists for two (2) substantive sessions:
 - Session 1: *Your Tax Dollars at Work: Government Programs and Initiatives*, featured diverse representatives from local, state, and federal government agencies, several with new and unique programs for DCBs.
 - Session II: *For We Have Promises to Keep: Private Sector Programs and Initiatives*, featured representatives from technology and communications companies, in addition to non-profit organizations representing Hispanic, Veteran, and Native American small businesses and entrepreneurs.²

The Planning Committee also made a concerted effort to engage in a social media campaign prior to and during the substantive part of the Symposium. In that respect, the Committee extends special thanks to Heather Gate, ACDDE Vice-Chair and her staff, as well as ACDDE members Dr. Fallon Wilson, representing the Tennessee for Higher Education's HBCU Success Office; Maurita Coley, President & CEO of the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) and her staff; and FCC staff, including the FCC Office of Media Relations. In

² See the FCC Public Notice, DA 21-462, April 21, 2021 for the Agenda: <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-releases-agenda-april-28-tech-diversity-opportunity-symposium>. Note that Melissa Bradley with 1863 Ventures, who appeared on the agenda, was not able to participate, resulting in 10 final panelists.

addition to the 2.746 million people potentially impacted, the social media campaign resulted in the following audience engagement and participation levels.³

- 880,046 potential reach (i.e., the total number of *people* who see the tweets)
- 82 Original Tweets
- 40 Total Contributors
- 22,001.15 Followers per Contributor

Source: <https://www.tweetbinder.com>

THE VIRTUAL FAIR

The Planning Committee decided that the Symposium should feature one-on-one networking sessions, which had previously been a highlight of the June 2018 FCC Conference and Workshop co-presented by the prior iteration of the ACDDE, the FCC Media Bureau, and the Office of Communications Business Opportunities (“OCBO”), notwithstanding the need to conduct the event in a virtual format due to the pandemic. During the 2018 Workshop, the one-on-one networking opportunities drew many DCBs across the country to visit Washington, D.C., to attend in person.

The June 2018 Workshop’s past success demonstrated the value in convening a Virtual Fair that provided a unique opportunity for direct engagement between DCBs and corporate/government/organization participants (“Participants”). However, the challenges inherent in planning the first Virtual Fair are reflected in the capacity and limitations of the virtual platform, outreach to Participants, marketing to DCBs, and scheduling appointments in a timely and organized manner.

Participants and DCBs needed to be moved in and out of a breakout session manually by ACDDE member Internet Association (“IA”), which provided the online platform for the Symposium as well as the Virtual Fair. There was also a need for a dedicated breakout room for FCC staff and Planning Committee Co-Leads to handle any scheduling issues and troubleshoot throughout each networking session (“Appointment Desk”). Therefore, the Planning Committee limited the number of breakout rooms for Participants and DCBs to a maximum of ten (10) rooms during each 90-minute networking session, with a five-minute break in between each 15-minute appointment. This allowed for a capacity of ten (10) Participants for each networking session hosted by IA.

- **Two consecutive Networking Sessions:**
 - **Session I:** 4:00 PM – 5:15PM (EDT) and
 - **Session II:** 5:30PM – 6:45 PM (EDT)

³ See the attached Social Media Metrics Report for hashtag #FCCDiversity.

The Planning Committee also moved the start time for the Symposium one hour earlier, so that the Virtual Fair would be completed earlier in the business day, yet still accommodate participants located on the West Coast.

The Planning Committee solicited Participants that:

- Were looking for DCB suppliers and vendors (Tier I and Tier II);
- Had financial support or could assist in securing financial support for DCBs;
- Had training, educational, or consulting programs/initiatives;
- Had discounted or special services and products for DCBs;
- Had mentoring, incubator, or apprenticeship programs/initiatives; and/or
- Had employment opportunities for DCBs.

Each Participant received one breakout room, allowing for a diverse selection of Participants overall. However, there could have been multiple individuals with the same Participant in each breakout room.

- **Outcome**
 - Fourteen (14) total Participants (the vast majority committed to both networking sessions). The Participants in the Virtual Fair were listed in the FCC Public Notice released on March 24, 2021. <https://www.fcc.gov/document/one-one-networking-featured-april-28-fcc-virtual-fair>
 - Two Participants scheduled for just the first networking session stayed to take stand-by appointments through part of the second networking session.
 - One Participant was unavailable for the Virtual Fair and we were able to accommodate the scheduled DCBs with appointments with other Participants.
 - Five (5) Participants hosted their own platforms, which enabled us to have more than 10 Participants overall.
 - Of ninety-six (96) potential appointment slots, eighty-five (85) were filled with a combination of scheduled and stand-by appointments. Only 80 appointments were initially estimated.
 - Eighty (80) Total DCBs participated.
 - Every DCB that elected to wait on stand-by for an appointment was able to secure at least one appointment; several DCBs were able to secure a second or third appointment.

Two key features that helped ease the scheduling logistics and assist Participants and DCBs were the virtual “Lobby” and the “Appointment Desk.” The Lobby allowed DCBs with confirmed appointments on the IA platform to check-in 10 minutes early for technical troubleshooting. However, DCBs with appointments on a Participant’s platform also used the Lobby to confirm their appointments and access the correct link/code for their appointments.

The most surprising benefit of the Lobby was that it served as its own networking forum for DCBs and Participants, who interacted amongst themselves, trading professional information. It

also served as an opportunity for DCBs and Participants to provide feedback about their experiences with the Symposium and Virtual Fair. Numerous DCBs, a few with only one scheduled appointment and no desire for an additional stand-by appointment, returned to the Lobby to express their appreciation for the opportunity and remark how well the appointment went. It was also helpful for Co-Lead Trigg to remain in the Lobby to assess problems, direct DCBs to the Appointment Desk, and answer questions, so that IA's IT Specialist could concentrate on moving people in and out of the breakout sessions.

The Appointment Desk was a critical component to the success of the Virtual Fair. FCC Media Bureau and OCBO staff, and Co-Lead Allen did an extraordinary job in handling stand-by appointments, scheduling issues and other logistics – an amazing feat of real-time traffic control. The DEI Working Group is very appreciative of FCC staff support during a very challenging virtual event.

The Planning Committee is grateful to the additional ACDDE Members who provided extraordinary support for the Symposium and Virtual Fair by soliciting speakers/panelists, providing advertising and marketing support, and/or as Participants in the Virtual Fair.

- Caroline Beasley, Beasley Broadcasting Group
- Maurita Cooley, Multicultural Media, Internet and Telecom Council
- Michelle Duke, National Association of Broadcasters Leadership Foundation
- Dr. Ronald Johnson, Wireless Infrastructure Association
- Ian Skorodin, Barcid Foundation
- Felicia West, Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia
- Dr. Fallon Wilson, Tennessee for Higher Education's HBCU Success Office

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The next-chartered ACDDE should partner with the FCC's Media Bureau and OCBO to host multiple diversity opportunity events based on the needs of DCBs and the state of the ICT sector. We purposefully do not propose a specific format so that the new ACDDE has flexibility to create the most productive event(s) appropriate for the time. However, we recommend that the events include substantive sessions and/or opportunities for one-on-one networking sessions (whether in person, virtual, or a combination of both depending on public health restraints). Below are some recommendations around planning and executing successful events (e.g., symposium and networking sessions, virtually and/or in person) based on the experience of the Planning Committee and the DEI Working Group:

Recommendations for Planning a Symposium

1. Explore changing the day and time of the event(s), to increase online attendance and to allow both the Symposium and networking sessions to be hosted on the FCC's Platform while accounting for the FCC's resource constraints. (Of course, the DEI Working Group recognizes that there may be other reasons to host either event on a third-party platform.)

2. Develop an agenda based on the stated needs of the DCBs and current opportunities (public or private) available that can impact the future success of DCBs. The ACDDE should invite relevant subject matter experts and organizations from across sectors to facilitate a robust discussion. This process takes time to identify experts, confirm availability, and obtain FCC approval. Maximum advance planning is strongly recommended.
3. Issue the first Public Notice of any event no later than four weeks in advance of the event. If the first Public Notice also includes the Virtual Fair (or in-person event and any combination thereof), publicize a soft deadline in the Public Notice to encourage DCBs to register as early as possible.
4. Encourage greater outreach to ACDDE Members and other stakeholders in advance of the Public Notice.

Recommendations for Facilitating a Virtual Fair

1. Request that Participating organizations provide robust descriptions of their support for DCBs for inclusion in the Public Notice. A link to the Participant's website is also advised, but a comprehensive description can drive DCB interest.
2. Provide at least a week of lead-time for Participants that host their own video conference platforms for the Virtual Fair, to contact scheduled DCBs with the platform access link/code.
3. Request that Participants that host own platform provide the FCC and Planning Committee with the access/link code. This will enable the Appointment Desk to better assist DCBs upon check-in.
4. Inform all Participants to be prepared to be active for the full length of the Networking Sessions, given last-minute scheduling and stand-by appointments.
5. Allow for stand-by appointments to accommodate DCBs that were not able to secure an appointment of their choice or those with last minute interest.
6. Retain the format for the Lobby that allows scheduled DCBs to check-in 10 minutes prior to their appointment, and any DCB who would like a stand-by appointment to obtain one, if available.
7. Consider scheduling DCBs on a rolling first-come, first-served basis, so that those DCBs would receive confirmation of appointments earlier and ease the burden of scheduling all DCBs just a week or two from the Virtual Fair.
8. Post the FCC Office of General Counsel-approved terms and conditions for participating in the Virtual Fair on the website at the time of registration and include relevant information in the FCC's appointment confirmation email to DCBs.
9. Consider a post-Virtual Fair survey for Participants to provide feedback regarding their participation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rudy Brioché
Susan Au Allen
S. Jenell Trigg

Social Media Metrics Report for #FCCDiversity 12 Noon – 3:45PM, April 28, 2021

Source: <https://www.tweetbinder.com/>

2,746,805 potential impacts ?	880,046 potential reach ?	40 total contributors ?	4.58 tweets per contributor ?
22,001.15 followers per contributor ?	82 original tweets ?	19 original contributors ?	4.32 original tweets per contributor ?

	MOST ACTIVE ?	Tweets
	@mmtconline MMTC	55
	@connectednation Connected Nation	38
	@jamilekadre Jamile Kadre	28
	@hgate2 Heather Gate	19
	@FCC The FCC	3

	RETWEETERS ?	Retweets
	@mmtconline MMTC	35
	@jamilekadre Jamile Kadre	28
	@hgate2 Heather Gate	14
	@connectednation Connected Nation	2
	@HHFoundation Hispanic Heritage...	2

	ORIGINAL TWEETS ?	Tweets
	@connectednation Connected Nation	36
	@mmtconline MMTC	20
	@hgate2 Heather Gate	5
	@FCC The FCC	3
	@Khung_fu_13 Karin Hung	3

	MOST POPULAR ?	Followers
	@FCC The FCC	710,777
	@TheSiliconHill The Silicon Hill	71,883
	@HHFoundation Hispanic Heritage...	14,258
	@MitranoForNY23 Tracy Mitrano	11,516
	@NPRChamber NPR Chamber of ...	9,405

	HIGHEST IMPACT ?	Impacts
	@FCC The FCC	2,132,331
	@connectednation Connected Nation	250,610
	@mmtconline MMTC	171,435
	@TheSiliconHill The Silicon Hill	71,883
	@HHFoundation Hispanic Heritage...	28,516

	TOP PHOTOGRAPHER ?	Photos
	@mmtconline MMTC	20
	@connectednation Connected Nation	9
	@letilatino Leticia Latino-van...	2
	@ConnectedIowa Connected Nation...	1
	@ConnectedOhio Connected Nation...	1

