

Women of Color and the Technological Frontier: Panelist Bios

Dr. Francine E. Alkisswani, Moderator



Francine Alkisswani, Ph.D. is a Telecommunications Policy Analyst for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Minority Broadband Initiative. Dr. Alkisswani's work in the information and communications technology sphere spans several years prior to NTIA. For instance, Dr. Alkisswani spearheaded a grant project to deliver campus-wide telecommunications infrastructure to Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. While at Cheyney, she also served on the City of Philadelphia Mayor's Telecommunications Advisory Committee, and the Pennsylvania Governor's Link-to-Learn Program Task Force. She came to NTIA as the evaluation specialist for the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP). Drawing on her experience as a Senior Evaluation Specialist in GAO's Program Evaluation and Methodology Division (PEMD), she helped to develop TOP's online reporting system for grantees and was responsible for requiring evaluation plans as a component of all grant applications and an evaluation report as a requirement of the final award report. She initiated a social science Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) for research and evaluation relating to the diffusion of telecommunications and information technology applications. The National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) BAA award report, "Historically Black Colleges and Universities: An Assessment of Networking and Connectivity," became the catalyst for Public Law 110-315-- The Minority Serving Institution Digital and Wireless Technology Opportunity Act--an example of "evidence-based" policy making.

At NTIA, she has been committed to advocating for and providing technical assistance in support of broadband deployment and digital inclusion for vulnerable populations. During 2018-2019, she served a detail to the White House Initiative on HBCUs to promote them as hubs of digital applications and innovation and to map a strategy to achieve the mission of campus-wide broadband deployment and improved broadband services. Since her return to NTIA, she has been committed to the agency's Minority Broadband Initiative that seeks to help address some of the longstanding digital connectivity gaps in our nation. The MBI seeks to collaborate with federal agencies, local governments, and the private sector to lay the groundwork for the expansion of broadband networks at HBCU, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Minority-Serving anchor institutions and in their anchor communities.

Dr. Alkisswani earned her undergraduate degree and Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh where she was both a Mellon Fellow and a Rockefeller Post-Doctoral Fellow.

Dr. Traci Morris, Panelist



Dr. Traci Morris, the Executive Director of the American Indian Policy (AIPI) Institute at Arizona State University is a member of the [Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma](#). Under her leadership, the AIPI has grown and diversified its service to Indian Country providing policy analysis, tribally driven research, and economic development capacity building and working with such Indian Country partners as NAFOA and AISES. In her work at both ASU and prior, Morris has worked with Native American nations; Tribal businesses; Native American non-profits; and has advocated for digital inclusion at the Federal Communications Commission and on Capitol Hill.

Morris's research and publications on Native American media and the digital divide is focused on Internet use, digital inclusion, network neutrality, digital and new media curriculums, and development of broadband networks in Indian Country. Morris spearheaded the groundbreaking *Tribal Technology Assessment: The State of Internet Service on Tribal Lands* in 2019. Her book, *Native American Voices: A Reader*, continues to be a primary teaching tool in colleges throughout the country.

Dr. Morris is Affiliated Faculty at ASU's [School for the Future of Innovation in Society](#), an Affiliate of ASU's [Center for Gender Equity in Science and Technology](#), an Affiliate of the [Center on Technology, Data and Society](#) at ASU, a former member of the Advisory Board for the Department of Labor's [Native American Employment and Training Council](#), President of the Board of the [Phoenix Indian Center](#), and on the Advisory Council of the [Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums](#). Formerly, Morris served a two-year appointment (2014-2016 and 2010-2012) to the Federal Communications Commission's [Consumer Advisory Committee](#).

As an entrepreneur prior to her ASU appointment, Morris founded [Homahota Consulting LLC](#), a national Native American woman-owned professional services firm working in policy analysis, telecommunications, education, and research assisting tribes in their nation-building efforts and working with Native Nations, tribal businesses and those businesses working with tribes.

Morris has an M. A. and Ph.D. from the University of Arizona's American Indian Studies, in addition to a B.A. in Liberal Arts from Colorado State University.

Dr. Fallon Wilson, Panelist



Dr. Fallon Wilson, Vice President, Policy, Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC). Dr. Wilson leads MMTC's work on three focus areas in the tech, media, and telecommunications (TMT) sectors. The sectors include: Technology, Data Privacy, Artificial Intelligence, and Civil Rights in the Digital Age; Infrastructure, Broadband Connectivity, and Digital Inclusion; and Multicultural Media Ownership and Content Diversity.

Prior to joining MMTC, Dr. Fallon Wilson co-founded #BlackTechFutures Research Institute and is the former Research Director of Black Tech Mecca. At Black Tech Mecca, Dr. Wilson created the Smart Black Tech Ecosystem Assessment to support local city leaders with building a thriving Black tech ecosystem. Recently, she was awarded a Kauffman Foundation's 2020 Open Knowledge grant to launch #BlackTechFutures Research Institute. #BlackTechFutures Research Institute builds a national network of city-based researchers and practitioners conducting research on sustainable local black tech ecosystems.

She is a member of the Federal Communications Commissions' Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment. She is a Board Member of the State of Tennessee's Future of Work Taskforce and Co-Chairs Nashville's smart city plan, Connected Nashville. During the pandemic, Dr. Wilson launched Nashville's Digital Inclusion and Access Taskforce to address the effects of the pandemic and the digital divide on communities of color. In seven months, she raised and launched a mixed method city assessment of digital inclusion in Nashville. Dr. Wilson chairs the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's HBCU Success Board. Dr. Wilson has a BA from Spelman College and MA/PhD from the University of Chicago.

Dr. Blanca Gordo, Panelist



Dr. Blanca Gordo is the principal investigator at the International Computer Science Institute (ICSI) in Berkeley, CA where she leads a research team to conduct an evaluation of a national public policy initiative in California.

She is also a visiting scholar at the Institute for the Study of Societal Issues (ISSI) at the University of California at Berkeley. Here Dr. Gordo is writing a book, *Digital Destitution*. Most recently, she was the Academic Coordinator for the Center for Latino Policy Research (CLPR) at the University of California at Berkeley, where she directed public policy initiatives, program

development, and the Technology and Development Research Group.

Dr. Gordo holds a doctorate in City and Regional Planning from the University of California, Berkeley. She specializes in the field of social problems and technology. Her view integrates regional- local economic development, urban poverty, technology development processes, organizational analysis and development, public policy, ethnic populations (African Americans and Latinos), demographics, and social inequality structures. She has taught related courses in the departments of City and Regional Planning and Ethnic Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, Department of Sociology at the University of San Francisco and Department of Mexican American Studies at San Jose State University.

As a City and Regional planner, Dr Gordo is engaged in public policy relevant issues affecting low income populations in the United States. She writes and speaks about emerging problems and obstacles facing low-income populations in the Information Age and Network Society. The integration of technology functions into society's productive development processes causes a need for the poor to learn to use information and communications technology (ICT). She draws out ways in which inequality is reproduced to point to the ways by which public policy interventions and civic programs can be structured to address the effects of social change on the poor.

Dr. Alisa Valentin, Rapporteur



Dr. Alisa Valentin is the Special Advisor to FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks where she advises the Commissioner on broadband access and adoption policies that impact communities of color, low-income communities, and other marginalized groups. Dr. Valentin also advises Commissioner Starks on policies related to the future of work and prison phone justice.

Prior to her work in the Office of FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks, Dr. Valentin was the Communications Justice Fellow at Public Knowledge, a consumer advocacy organization, in Washington, DC. During her time at Public Knowledge, Dr. Valentin advocated for inclusive broadband access, broadband adoption, artificial intelligence, and consumer data privacy policies.

Dr. Valentin has also taught communications and women's studies courses at several colleges and universities in the DC-metro area including Howard University, Trinity Washington University, Montgomery College, and Northern Virginia Community College. Dr. Valentin received her Ph.D. in Communications from Howard University. She also holds an M.S. in Journalism from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and a B.S. in Telecommunications from the University of Florida.