



2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL

May 17-19, 2026

# BUSINESS SUMMIT & EXPO

PHL DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Mayor's Business Action Team

MAY 17 | MAY 18 | MAY 19  
LA SALLE UNIVERSITY, FOUNDERS' HALL







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# PROGRAM AGENDA

## DAY ONE AT A GLANCE

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING LUNCH
12:00 PM - 12:20 PM	OPENING REMARKS + ACTING COMMERCE DIRECTOR ADDRESS
12:20 PM - 1:20 PM	FIRESIDE CHAT
1:20 PM - 2:20 PM	BREAK OUT SESSIONS
2:20 PM - 2:50 PM	MAYOR ADDRESS
2:50 PM - 3:15 PM	CAPITAL IMPACT TALK
3:15 PM - 3:40 PM	MAYORS OFFICE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD AFFAIRS
3:40 PM - 4:30 PM	PLENARY PANEL
4:30 PM - 5:00 PM	CLOSING REMARKS + NETWORKING

## DAY TWO AT A GLANCE

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING BREAKFAST
9:00 AM - 9:20 AM	OPENING REMARKS + LEADERSHIP INSIGHT
9:20 AM - 10:20 AM	PLENARY PANEL: ADAPTING TO CHANGE   LEADERSHIP IN THE AGE OF TRANSFORMATION
10:20 AM - 11:20 AM	BREAK OUT SESSIONS
11:20 AM - 12:20 PM	PLENARY PANEL: DRIVING GROWTH THROUGH LEADERSHIP

12:20 PM - 1:20 PM	NETWORKING LUNCH
1:20 PM - 2:00 PM	LEADERSHIP THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP
2:00 PM - 2:45 PM	STATE RESOURCES FOR BUSINESS
2:45 PM - 3:45 PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS
3:45 PM - 3:55 PM	LEADERSHIP INSIGHT: CULTIVATING OPPORTUNITY
3:55 PM - 4:45 PM	TECH & COMMUNITY IMPACT
4:45 PM - 5:00 PM	CLOSING REMARKS + NETWORKING

## DAY THREE AT A GLANCE

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING BREAKFAST
9:00 AM - 9:20 AM	OPENING REMARKS + LEADERSHIP INSIGHT
9:20 AM - 10:20 AM	PLENARY PANEL: COMMUNITY AT THE CORE, DRIVING GROWTH THROUGH LOCAL ENTERPRISE
10:20 AM - 11:20 AM	BREAK OUT SESSIONS
11:20 AM - 12:20 PM	PLENARY PANEL: BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES   THE LOCAL BUSINESS ADVANTAGE
12:20 PM - 1:20 PM	NETWORKING LUNCH
1:20 PM - 2:20 PM	THE BUSINESS BEHIND THE BEAT
2:20 PM - 3:20 PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS
3:20 PM - 4:30 PM	PITCH COMPETITION
4:30 PM - 5:00 PM	CLOSING REMARKS + NETWORKING



# WELCOME

2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL

May 17-19, 2026

## BUSINESS SUMMIT & EXPO

**PHL DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
Mayor's Business Action Team



### MAYOR, CHERELLE L. PARKER

Cherelle L. Parker is the 100th Mayor of the City of Philadelphia. Born to a single teenage mother and raised by her grandparents James and Dorothy Parker, Mayor Parker is a Philadelphia native. It was the power of a village – her family and her community – and their belief in the power of education that gave her the opportunity to -succeed. A graduate of Philadelphia public schools, Mayor Parker was the first person in her family to go to college; earning her bachelor's degree from Lincoln University where she became a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., then earning her master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Inspired to public service by Philadelphia Councilwoman Marian Tasco, whom she interned for, the future mayor worked in Tasco's office and rose to serve as a senior staffer where she oversaw the implementation of all economic and community development initiatives that helped neighborhoods and business corridors thrive.

The future mayor was elected to the State House and served for ten years representing Northwest Philadelphia, the 200th district. On winning her election, she made history as the youngest African-American woman elected to the State Legislature. She was elected to City Council in 2015 to represent the 9th Council District and by 2019 was elected by her peers to serve as City Council Majority Leader. In the 2023 mayoral election, Cherelle L. Parker won a highly contested Democratic Primary and General Election to become the 100th Mayor of Philadelphia and the first woman to hold the office.



**ACTING COMMERCE DIRECTOR, CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
KAREN FEGELY**

Karen Fegely is Acting Commerce Director for the City of Philadelphia. In addition, she continues to lead the Commerce Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives which involves engaging the business community, economic development partners, and elected officials to put forth policy, legislation, and communications that support inclusive growth. Karen's team is on point for Mayor Parker's new PHL Open for Business initiative. Previously, Karen led Commerce's Office of

Neighborhood Economic Development and Business Services, implementing community development and wealth building programs and direct assistance to small businesses, as well as capital improvements to commercial corridor streetscapes around the city. She has over 20 years of experience working in the public and private sectors to strengthen businesses and communities. Prior to joining the City, Karen's early career included retaining and growing manufacturing in Philadelphia, Black family farms in Arkansas, and affordable housing in the Bronx.



**DEPUTY COMMERCE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF  
BUSINESS SUCCESS, SALIM WILSON**

Salim Wilson is the Deputy Director of the Department of Commerce, Office of Business Success which oversees service excellence for small businesses through the Mayor's Business Action Team, nighttime economy initiatives and capital projects. The Office of Business Success also manages the Storefront Improvement Program, the Liberty Bell Safe Certification Program and the Business Security Camera Program. Salim has been with the Department of Commerce since 2017, first as a Business Services Manager in the Office of Business Services, where he supported businesses to start, sustain, and grow.

Salim brings a wealth of experience, patience, and an outgoing personality that puts businesses at ease, and leaves them with clearer understanding and direction toward accomplishing their business goals and dreams. Before joining the City of Philadelphia, Salim dedicated over 23 years to the private, public, and nonprofit sectors providing guidance and assistance in business, accounting, contracting, finance and project management.



**SENIOR DIRECTOR, MAYOR'S BUSINESS ACTION TEAM,  
MICHELLE PRICE**

Michelle Price is the Senior Director of the Mayor's Business Action Team (MBAT) for the City of Philadelphia's Department of Commerce, where she leads the City's frontline support team for small businesses. Since joining the Department of Commerce in 2015, Michelle has advanced through multiple leadership roles, helping expand access to business resources, government navigation, and economic opportunities for entrepreneurs across Philadelphia. Known for her hands-on

leadership style and strong community relationships, she is passionate about making government more accessible and responsive to the needs of business owners. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Michelle takes great pride in serving the city she loves and remains deeply committed to empowering local businesses, strengthening neighborhoods, and creating pathways to economic opportunity throughout Philadelphia.



**DIRECTOR, MAYOR'S OFFICE OF MUSLIM ENGAGEMENT  
IMAM QUAISER D. ABDULLAH**

Imam Quaiser D. Abdullah, Ph.D., serves as the inaugural Director of the Mayor's Office of Muslim Engagement for the City of Philadelphia. In this role, he works to strengthen relationships between City government and Philadelphia's diverse Muslim communities through community engagement, relationship-building, civic partnership, and strategic collaboration. As the City's inaugural Director of Muslim

Engagement, he is helping build long-term pathways for partnership between Philadelphia's Muslim communities and local government. Grounded in service, dignity, and bridge-building, his work advances Mayor Cherelle L. Parker's vision of a safer, cleaner, greener Philadelphia with access to economic opportunity for all. His work centers on ensuring that Muslim voices are meaningfully represented in public life and policymaking while advancing initiatives focused on wellness, civic engagement, workforce development, violence prevention, interfaith collaboration, and economic opportunity. A lifelong advocate for faith-based and civic collaboration, Imam Quaiser has held leadership roles across numerous Muslim, interfaith, and civic organizations. He previously served as one of the resident Imams at Masjid Quba/Quba Institute. His past leadership includes serving as Board Chair of Interfaith Philadelphia (2021–2024), Co-President of the Association for Conflict Resolution (2023–2024), and Co-Chair of the Mayor's Commission on Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs (2021–2023). Dr. Abdullah is also an Assistant Professor at Temple University with expertise in communication, conflict management, organizational leadership, and community development. His academic and civic work focuses on translating dialogue, leadership, and relationship-building into practical tools for institutional and community impact.



**DEPUTY CIO FOR SUPPORT SERVICES, OFFICE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY, IDRIS ABDUL-ZAHIR**

Idris Abdul-Zahir is the Deputy Chief Information Officer (CIO) for Support Services at the City of Philadelphia’s Office of Innovation and Technology. He has over a decade of experience as a business and technology leader committed to driving equitable digital transformation across municipal services.



**SENIOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, PIDC, CAMILLE N. SIMPKINS**

Camille N. Simpkins is the Senior Business Development Manager at the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), where she advances equitable economic growth by supporting businesses across Greater Philadelphia with access to capital, technical assistance, and strategic growth planning resources. Since joining PIDC in 2022 as a Relationship Manager, Camille has led impactful communications and

marketing initiatives designed to help businesses invest, develop, and scale. A dedicated small business advocate, she partners closely with the City of Philadelphia’s Commerce department to strengthen community-based workforce and economic development efforts. As a member of PIDC’s Financial Services team, Camille works with commercial and retail businesses in every area of the city, providing the tools, knowledge, networks, financing, and real estate resources that help businesses achieve long-term success.

# DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE: MAYOR'S BUSINESS ACTION TEAM



## WHAT WE DO

The Mayor's Business Action Team (MBAT) in the Department of Commerce provides personalized assistance in multiple languages to business owners for all aspects of doing business in Philadelphia. Business Services Managers are City liaisons providing entrepreneurs access to information through in-person outreach and customized virtual services.

## FREE BUSINESS SUPPORT AVAILABLE

MBAT business services managers can assist with questions, such as:

- What is the process of registering my business in Philadelphia?
- How can I improve my business financial planning to pay taxes in full?
- What funding is available to help grow and improve my business?

## CONTACT US

**Email:** [business@phila.gov](mailto:business@phila.gov)

**Call:** 215-683-2100

## LEARN MORE



# MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CONSTITUENCY ENGAGEMENT



## WHAT WE DO

The Office of Constituency Engagement (OCE) enhances community outreach and engagement in Philadelphia. We empower residents to connect with City government. By promoting inclusivity, we aim to make everyone's voice heard.

## THE OFFICE OVERSEES:

- Mayor's Office of Black Male Engagement
- Mayor's Office of Engagement for Women
- Mayor's Office of Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs
- Mayor's Office of Latino Engagement
- Mayor's Office of Muslim Engagement
- Mayor's Office of Panhellenic & HBCU Engagement
- Mayor's Office of Youth Engagement

## CONTACT US

**Email:**

[ConstituencyEngagement@phila.gov](mailto:ConstituencyEngagement@phila.gov)

## LEARN MORE



# LIBERTY

*Empowering Entrepreneurs for Independence*

**DAY ONE**

Sunday  
May 17, 2026



## PROGRAM AGENDA

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	<b>REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING LUNCH</b>
12:00 PM - 12:10 PM	<b>OPENING REMARKS</b> Salim Wilson, <i>Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Business Success</i> Camille Simpkins, <i>Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC</i> Heloise Jettison, <i>Deputy Commerce Director, Chief of Staff</i>
12:10 PM - 12:20 PM	<b>COMMERCE DIRECTOR ADDRESS</b> <b>Independence to Innovate   Freedom to Thrive</b> Karen Fegely, <i>Acting Commerce Director, City of Philadelphia</i>
12:20 PM - 1:20 PM	<b>FIRESIDE CHAT</b> <b>Local Business   The Backbone of Economic Liberty</b> Moderator - Camille Simpkins, <i>Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC</i> Speaker - Markita Morris-Louis, <i>CEO, COMPASS Working Capital</i>
1:20 PM - 2:20 PM	<b>BREAK OUT SESSIONS</b> <i>Choose your Path to Empowerment</i> <b>Unlocking Capital Growth</b> Wells Fargo <b>AI Your Business</b> Idris Abdul-Zahi, <i>Deputy Chief Information Officer for Support Services, Office of Innovation and Technology</i> <b>Liberty in Action - Innovation for the Future</b> Kevin Williams, <i>CEO and President, Black Squirrel</i> <b>Building Inclusive Business Models for Sustainable Growth</b> Chris Hess, <i>Philadelphia Community College, Power Up Your Business</i>
2:20 PM - 2:50 PM	<b>MAYOR ADDRESS</b> Mayor Cherelle L. Parker, <i>City of Philadelphia</i>



**2:50 PM - 3:15 PM**

**CAPITAL IMPACT TALK**  
**Liberty Through Capital | Unlocking Pathways to Economic Independence**  
 Moderator - Quaiser Abdullah, *Director, Office of Muslim Engagement*  
 Speaker - Shoeb Sharieff, *Ijara CDC*

**3:15 PM - 3:40 PM**

**MAYOR'S OFFICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**  
 Moderator - Anton Moore, *Director, Mayor's Office of Public Engagement*

Speakers:  
 William Garcia, *Director, Office of Latino Engagement*  
 Abu Edwards, *Director, Office of Black Male Engagement*  
 Shania Bennett, *Director, Office of Youth Engagement*  
 Quaiser Abdullah, *Director, Office of Muslim Engagement*  
 Robin Torrence, *Director, Office of Panhellenic and HBCU Engagement*  
 Bishop Wilfred Speaks, *Director, Office of Faith Based and Interfaith Affairs*  
 Keiwana McKinney-Forde, *Director, Office of Women Engagement*

**3:40 PM - 4:30 PM**

**PLENARY PANEL**  
**Liberty Through Local Leadership**  
 Moderator - Salim Willson, *Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Business Success*

Panelists:  
 Joseph Hohenstein, *State Representative, 177<sup>th</sup> Legislative District*  
 Nina Ahmed, *Councilmember at Large*

**4:30 PM - 5:00 PM**

**CLOSING SESSION**  
**Call to Action**  
 Camille Simpkins, *Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC*



## **SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS**

### **Fireside Chat**

### **Local Business - The Backbone of Economic Liberty**

#### **MODERATOR**

#### **CAMILLE N. SIMPKINS**

*Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC*

Camille N. Simpkins is the Senior Business Development Manager at the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), where she advances equitable economic growth by supporting businesses across Greater Philadelphia with access to capital, technical assistance, and strategic growth planning resources. Since joining PIDC in 2022 as a Relationship Manager, Camille has led impactful communications and marketing initiatives designed to help businesses invest, develop, and scale. A dedicated small business advocate, she partners closely with the City of Philadelphia's Commerce department to strengthen community-based workforce and economic development efforts. As a member of PIDC's Financial Services team, Camille works with commercial and retail businesses in every area of the city, providing the tools, knowledge, networks, financing, and real estate resources that help businesses achieve long-term success.

#### **SPEAKER**

#### **MARKITA MORRIS-LOUIS**

*CEO, COMPASS Working Capital*

Markita Morris-Louis, Esq., is the CEO of Compass Working Capital, a national nonprofit dedicated to helping families with low incomes build assets and financial capabilities to escape poverty. She leads efforts to scale the federal Family Self-Sufficiency program through partnerships, technical assistance, and policy reform. Previously, she served as Chief Strategy Officer at Compass and as SVP & General Counsel at Clarifi, where she oversaw a team of counselors serving 15,000 clients annually. A Brown University and New York University (NYU) School of Law alumna, Markita's leadership is rooted in equity, intuition, and community-centered impact.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## Capital Impact Talk

### Liberty Through Capital: Unlocking Pathways to Economic Independence

#### MODERATOR

##### **QUAISER ABDULLAH**

*Director, Office of Muslim Engagement*

Imam Quaiser D. Abdullah, Ph.D., serves as the inaugural Director of the Mayor's Office of Muslim Engagement for the City of Philadelphia. In this role, he works to strengthen relationships between City government and Philadelphia's diverse Muslim communities through community engagement, relationship-building, civic partnership, and strategic collaboration. As the City's inaugural Director of Muslim Engagement, he is helping build long-term pathways for partnership between Philadelphia's Muslim communities and local government. Dr. Abdullah is also an Assistant Professor at Temple University with expertise in communication, conflict management, organizational leadership, and community development. His academic and civic work focuses on translating dialogue, leadership, and relationship-building into practical tools for institutional and community impact. Imam Quaiser remains deeply committed to social justice, spiritual development, family and community wellbeing, and uplifting marginalized voices. He believes that lasting change is built through partnership, trust, and a city government that communities can truly "see, touch, and feel."

#### SPEAKER

##### **SHOEB SHARIEFF**

*IJARA CDC*

Shoeb M. Sharieff is the president and CEO of Ijara Community Development Corp (IjaraCDC), a pioneering non-profit dedicated to delivering riba-free, Sharia-compliant financing solutions for consumers and businesses across North America. Building on more than two decades of experience in Islamic finance, real estate, and construction, he has been at the forefront of developing practical, Riba-free home and commercial financing models that align with both U.S. regulatory requirements and classical Shariah principles. Since founding Ijara's Islamic leasing-based programs in 2005, Shoeb has led the design and implementation of proprietary home finance structures vetted by internationally recognized Shariah scholars, enabling thousands of families to access halal paths to homeownership while avoiding conventional interest-bearing loans. He has advised financial institutions on structuring Islamic finance products, bridging the gap between community needs and institutional standards, and has been a featured voice on topics such as Islamic leasing, halal investing, and ethical banking. Shoeb holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and brings a distinctive blend of technical expertise, entrepreneurial experience, and community engagement to his work. A frequent speaker at conferences, community events, and educational forums, he is known for translating complex Islamic finance concepts into clear, actionable guidance for practitioners, regulators, and consumers, and for championing ethical alternatives within the broader financial system.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## Plenary Panel Liberty Through Local Leadership

### MODERATOR

#### **SALIM WILSON**

*Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Business Success*

Salim Wilson is the Deputy Director of the Department of Commerce, Office of Business Success which oversees service excellence for small businesses through the Mayor's Business Action Team, nighttime economy initiatives and capital projects. The Office of Business Success also manages the Storefront Improvement Program, the Liberty Bell Safe Certification Program and the Business Security Camera Program. Salim has been with the Department of Commerce since 2017, first as a Business Services Manager in the Office of Business Services, where he supported businesses to start, sustain, and grow. Salim brings a wealth of experience, patience, and an outgoing personality that puts businesses at ease, and leaves them with clearer understanding and direction toward accomplishing their business goals and dreams. Before joining the City of Philadelphia, Salim dedicated over 23 years to the private, public, and nonprofit sectors providing guidance and assistance in business, accounting, contracting, finance and project management.

### SPEAKER

#### **JOSEPH HOHENSTEIN**

*State Representative 177<sup>th</sup> Legislative District*

Joseph Hohenstein is a lifelong Philadelphian and dedicated public servant whose career reflects the power of local leadership in advancing liberty and opportunity. Representing the 177th Legislative District since 2019, Joe champions policies that reflect a commitment to fairness, inclusion, and the belief that strong neighborhoods are the foundation of a thriving democracy. Joe Hohenstein embodies "Liberty through Local Leadership" by turning grassroots values into legislative action ensuring that every voice in his district has a seat at the table and a stake in shaping Pennsylvania's future.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## SPEAKER

### **NINA AHMAD**

*Councilmember at Large*

Nina Ahmad, Ph.D., is an At-Large member of the Philadelphia City Council and the first South Asian American, first Muslim woman, and first immigrant in recent history to serve on Council. A molecular geneticist by training and former Deputy Mayor for Public Engagement, she has spent her career advancing gender equity, community empowerment, and civic inclusion. Born in Bangladesh and shaped by the Liberation War, she brings a global perspective to local leadership in Philadelphia.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## AI Your Business

## SPEAKER

### **IDRIS ABDUL-ZAHIR**

*Deputy Chief Information Officer for Support Services, Office of Innovation and Technology, City of Philadelphia*

Idris Abdul-Zahir is the Deputy CIO for Support Services at the City of Philadelphia's Office of Innovation & Technology. He has over a decade of experience as a business and technology leader committed to driving equitable digital transformation across municipal services.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## Liberty in Action: Innovating for the Future

### FACILITATOR

#### KEVIN WILLIAMS

*CEO & President, Black Squirrel*

Kevin Williams is a visionary leader and the driving force behind Black Squirrel, a company dedicated to redefining possibilities through innovation and strategic foresight. As CEO and President, Kevin has championed initiatives that merge cutting-edge technology with community empowerment, creating solutions that not only meet today's challenges but anticipate tomorrow's opportunities. His leadership philosophy centers on freedom through innovation empowering organizations and individuals to take bold action in shaping a future that is inclusive, sustainable, and transformative. With a proven track record of turning ideas into impactful realities, Kevin brings a wealth of experience and insight to the conversation on how liberty and innovation intersect to drive progress.

## Building Inclusive Business Models for Sustainable Growth

### FACILITATOR

#### CHRIS HESS

*Philadelphia Community College, Power Up Your Business*

Christopher Hess is a dedicated Small Business Resource Services Coordinator and ecosystem developer with over 15 years of experience empowering entrepreneurs. By bridging the gap between higher education, Community Development Corporations, and Chambers of Commerce, Christopher has become a go-to resource for small business growth in Philadelphia and its surrounding counties. Throughout his career, Christopher has developed over 60 specialized workshops covering essential topics like marketing, finance, and business structure. He is the architect behind the Industry Best Practices Series spanning e-commerce, retail, and manufacturing and was the visionary creator of the 2020 Small Business Resource Fair, which united over 25 service providers to support the local economy. A proud graduate of Temple University with a B.B.A. in Business Administration, Christopher combines deep for-profit expertise with a passion for mentoring the next generation of business owners. Currently serving as the Power Up Your Business Coordinator at the Community College of Philadelphia, he remains committed to fostering a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem through strategic workshop, social media engagement, and hands-on mentoring and outreach.

# LEADERSHIP

*Growing Community Through Collective Leadership*

**DAY TWO**

Monday  
May 18, 2026



## PROGRAM AGENDA

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM

**REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING BREAKFAST**

9:00 AM - 9:10 AM

**OPENING REMARKS**

Salim Wilson, *Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Business Success*  
Michelle Price, *Senior Director, Mayor's Business Action Team, Office of Business Success, Department of Commerce*  
Donovan West, *Director, Mayor's Business Roundtables*  
Camille Simpkins, *Director, Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC*

9:10 AM - 9:20 AM

**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT**

**Growing Community Through Collective Leadership**

Yvonne Boye, *Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Neighborhood Economic Development*

9:20 AM - 10:20 AM

**PLENARY PANEL**

**Adapting to Change | Leadership In the Age of Transformation**

**Moderator:** Aissia Richardson, *Director, African American United Fund*

**Panelists:**

Emmanuella Myrthil, *AGM, Cultural & Social Impact, SEPTA*  
Alia-Bey Sutton, *Founder, A Sutton*  
Nilda Ruiz, *President & CEO, APM*

10:20 AM - 11:20 AM

**BREAK OUT SESSIONS**

*Choose your path to leadership*

**Leading Through Crisis: Building Resilience and Confidence for Independent Growth**

Ahmed Whitt, *Director, Center for Wealth Equity, Living Cities*

**Transformational Leadership: Driving Change, Empower Teams, Unlock Creativity**

Lou Fabian, *Managing Director, Webforce5*

**Pathways to Entrepreneurial Growth: From Idea to Impact**

Camille Simpkins, *Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC*

**Why Succession Planning Matters for Small Businesses**

Tim Daniels, *Lead Instructor, LA21*

**Plenary Panel**

**Driving Growth Through Leadership**

**11:20 AM - 12:20 PM**

**Moderator:** Bryan Smith, *Investment Banker, Goldman Sachs*

**Panelist:**

Jodie Harris, *President, PIDC*

Tom Dowling, *Vice President, Pursuit*

Will Gonzalez, *Executive Director, Ceiba*

**12:20 PM - 1:20 PM**

**NETWORKING LUNCH**

**LEADERSHIP THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

**Inspiring Journey's from Two Local Businesses**

**1:20 PM - 2:00 PM**

**Facilitator:** Michelle Price, *Senior Director, Mayor's Business Action Team, Office of Business Success, Department of Commerce*

**Business Owners:**

Amir Raja, *Owner, Al Salam Grill*

Dominique Calhoun, *Founder, Remix Living*

**2:00 PM - 2:45 PM**

**STATE RESOURCES FOR BUSINESS**

**Leading through Opportunity: State Resources That Empower Business Growth**

**Moderator:** Audrey Smith, *Outreach Coordinator, Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion & Small Business*

**Panelist:**

Ryan Emerson, *Director of Grants, Business Finance & Workforce Development*

Dr. Erica Patterson, *Deputy Secretary for Business Inclusion & Supplier Development*

## Break Out Sessions

*Choose Your Path to Leadership*

### Leading Through Smart Pricing Strategy: Pricing Based on Value + Cost

Tim Daniels, *Lead Instructor, LA21*

### Wealth Building: A Guide for Local Entrepreneurs

Kersey Azocar, *President & CEO, Greenline Access Capital*

### Bridging Communities: Leadership that Connects People, Resources & Opportunity

Khine Zaw Arthur, Ph.D., *President & CEO, Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia*

2:45 PM - 3:45 PM

## LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

### Cultivating Opportunity

Dawn Summerville, *Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Business Development*

3:45 PM - 3:55 PM

## TECH AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

### Leading with Vision: Empowering Entrepreneurs in Philadelphia's Innovative Economy

#### Moderator:

Tempest Carter, *Director, Strategic Tech Initiatives, Department of Commerce*

#### Panelist:

Lilly Chen, *President & CEO, FHS Technology*

Charney Robinson-Williams, *CPO, 1PHL*

Iola Harper, *Executive Director, WORC*

3:55 PM - 4:45 PM

## CLOSING SESSION

### Call to Action

Camille Simpkins, *Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC*

4:45 PM - 5:00 PM

## SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

### Leadership Insight

### Growing Community Through Collective Leadership

#### SPEAKER

#### **YVONNE BOYE**

*Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Neighborhood Development*

Yvonne Boye manages programs that revitalize commercial corridors, support neighborhood-based businesses, and create neighborhood jobs. Yvonne has been with Commerce for over 20 years, previously overseeing economic development projects and administering grants and contracts. Prior to joining the City, she worked with the Ministry of Finance in Ghana and social service institutions.

### PLENARY PANEL

### Adapting to Change: Leadership In the Age of Transformation

#### MODERATOR

#### **AISSIA RICHARDSON**

*Director, African American United Fund*

Aissia Richardson's career spans roles including President of the African American United Fund and Vice President of Operations for the Uptown Entertainment and Development Corporation, where she helped secure over \$5 million for the Uptown Theater restoration. A dedicated civic leader, she has served on numerous boards and advisory committees focused on equity, transportation, housing, and environmental justice. She is a North Philadelphia resident, mother of three, and grandmother.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## PANELIST

### **EMMANUELLA MYRTHIL**

*GM, Cultural & Social Impact, SEPTA*

Emmanuella Myrthil (she/they) is Assistant General Manager, Cultural & Social Impact at SEPTA, leading the Authority's people strategy, cultural vision, and the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Office to foster inclusivity and equity among employees, customers, and community partners. With over 18 years in transportation, she formerly led DEI and DBE initiatives at HNTB and Georgia DOT. A SUNY New Paltz journalism graduate, Emmanuella is a dynamic speaker whose work centers on transforming organizational culture and expanding equitable access in public infrastructure.

## PANELIST

### **ALIA-BEY SUTTON**

*Founder, A Sutton*

Alia-Bey Sutton-Bey is the founder of A Sutton-Bey LLC, a consulting firm specializing in trauma-informed leadership, workforce development, and human-centered culture design for organizations and Black women leaders. With over two decades of experience including roles at Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, JEVS AmeriCorps, and Propel America, she develops and scales innovative programs that bridge opportunity gaps in workforce systems. Alia also co-founded the African Diaspora Arts Collective (ADAC) and holds a B.S. from Temple University, an M.S. from Springfield College, plus a Cornell certificate in DEI workforce building. An engaging speaker, she catalyzes organizational change through trauma-informed practices, psychological safety, and equity centered leadership.

## PANELIST

### **NILDA RUIZ**

*President & CEO, APM*

Nilda Iris Ruiz, MBA, has served as President & CEO of Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM) since 2005, transforming the organization into one of the leading Latino-founded social service agencies in the U.S. by driving more than \$1 billion in investment through green affordable housing, nationally accredited early childhood centers, and community-centered workforce programs. A Philadelphia native and Temple University alumna, she sits on multiple local and national boards including LISC, the Urban Affairs Coalition, and the National Puerto Rican Agenda and is a dynamic speaker on leadership, equity, and sustainable community development.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## Plenary Panel Driving Growth Through Leadership

### MODERATOR

#### **BRYAN SMITH**

*Investment Banker, Goldman Sachs*

Bryan Smith is a dynamic business advisor and educator dedicated to empowering small business owners through strategic guidance and practical tools. As part of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses (10KSB) program, Bryan delivers marketing and sales workshops, facilitates legal clinics, and supports alumni engagement initiatives that help entrepreneurs thrive in competitive markets. With a strong background in business development and community outreach, Bryan has played a pivotal role in strengthening Philadelphia's small business ecosystem. His recent engagements include leading marketing strategy sessions for 10KSB cohorts and hosting alumni networking events focused on growth and sustainability. Inspirational Quote:

### PANELIST

#### **JODIE HARRIS**

*President, PIDC*

Jodie Harris is a dynamic leader dedicated to fostering inclusive economic growth and empowering businesses to thrive. As an industry leader at PIDC, Philadelphia's public-private economic development corporation, Jodie drives strategies that strengthen local enterprises, create jobs, and build resilient communities. Her approach to leadership centers on collaboration and innovation ensuring that growth is not only robust but equitable. With a proven track record in advancing access to capital and resources for diverse entrepreneurs, Jodie exemplifies how visionary leadership can transform challenges into opportunities and fuel sustainable progress for all.

### PANELIST

#### **TOM DOWLING**

*Vice President, Pursuit*

Tom Dowling is Vice President of Business Development at Pursuit, a mission-driven community lender serving CT, NY, NJ, and PA. With extensive experience in small business lending, he specializes in business acquisitions, startups, expansions, and access to capital helping companies navigate and secure financing ranging from \$10,000 to \$5.5 million through over 15 tailored loan programs, including SSBCI-backed initiative.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## PANELIST

### **WILL GONZALEZ**

*Executive Director, Ceiba*

Will Gonzalez is the Executive Director of Ceiba. He has more than 25 years of experience working for the rights of the Latino community. His work as the director of nonprofit organizations was recognized in the 1990s with the “Williams Award for Organizational Excellence” from the Philadelphia Foundation and the “Community Change Award” from the Bread & Roses Community Fund. In 2012, Mr. González was one of the recipients of the “Minority Business Leaders Award” from the Philadelphia Business Journal. He has been the Executive Director of Ceiba since 2002. Under his leadership, Ceiba adopted quality standards and best management practices in housing counseling and integrated with that counseling several support services to improve the financial well-being of moderate-income families. These services include free tax preparation and Individual Development Account (IDA) savings programs. Mr. González is recognized by the IRS as an Authorized ITIN Acceptance Agent and a VITA tax preparer.

## LEADERSHIP THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP Inspiring Journey's from Two Local Businesses

## FACILITATOR

### **MICHELLE PRICE**

*Senior Director, Mayor's Business Action Team, Office of Business Success*

Michelle Price is the Senior Director of the Mayor's Business Action Team (MBAT) for the City of Philadelphia's Department of Commerce, where she leads the City's frontline support team for small businesses. Since joining the Department of Commerce in 2015, Michelle has advanced through multiple leadership roles, helping expand access to business resources, government navigation, and economic opportunities for entrepreneurs across Philadelphia. Known for her hands-on leadership style and strong community relationships, she is passionate about making government more accessible and responsive to the needs of business owners. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Michelle takes great pride in serving the city she loves and remains deeply committed to empowering local businesses, strengthening neighborhoods, and creating pathways to economic opportunity throughout Philadelphia.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS



## BUSINESS OWNER

**AMIR RAJA**

*Owner | Al Salam Grill*

924 LEVICK ST. | PHILADELPHIA, PA | 19111

## BUSINESS OWNER

**DOMINIQUE CALHOUN**

*Founder | Remix Living*

4500 WORTH ST. L 101+L 202  
PHILADELPHIA, PA | 19124



## STATE RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES

**Leading through Opportunity: State Resources That Empower Business Growth**

## MODERATOR

**AUDREY SMITH**

*Outreach Coordinator, Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion & Small Business*

Audrey Smith is the Outreach Coordinator at PA's Bureau of, Inclusion & Supplier Development Opportunities, where she drives supplier engagement across the commonwealth supporting small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses to access certification, win contracts, and scale through effective procurement strategies. With over seven years at BDISBO, Audrey conducts outreach, coaching, and mentoring programs that help suppliers navigate the Commonwealth's contracting ecosystem and elevate their market presence.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## PANELIST

### **RYAN EMERSON**

*Director of Grants, Business Finance & Workforce Development*

Ryan Emerson serves as the Director of Grants for Business Finance at the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Ryan leads a team who review and evaluate grant applications to make impactful investments of Commonwealth funds to improve Pennsylvania communities and businesses. Ryan administers state and federally funded programs, including the Pennsylvania First Program, the Pennsylvania Strategic Investments to Enhance Sites (PA SITES), the Multimodal Transportation Fund, and the PA State Small Business Credit Initiative.

Prior to this role, Ryan served as the Director of the CFA Programs Division where he oversaw programs administered under the Commonwealth Financing Authority, include Alternative and Clean Energy Programs, the Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program, and the PA Small Water and Sewer Program. Ryan joined DCED in 2009 as an Economic Development Analyst. Ryan graduated from the Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and a minor in Civic and Community Engagement.

## PANELIST

### **DR. ERICA PATTERSON**

*Deputy Secretary for Business Inclusion & Supplier Development*

Dr. Erica Patterson serves as the Deputy Secretary for Business Inclusion, & Supplier Development, Pennsylvania Department of General Services. She leads statewide efforts to increase small diverse and small business participation in Pennsylvania's economy. With more than 20 years of experience in supply chain management and supplier diversity, she has held key roles at PGW, GSK, PHA, Arkema, and Sunoco. Dr. Patterson has been widely recognized for her leadership, earning honors from WBEC-East, EMSDC, Diversity Plus Magazine, and the Philadelphia Business Journal. She holds a Doctorate in Management and Organizational Leadership, along with multiple advanced degrees.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## Tech & Community Impact

### Leading with Vision: Empowering Entrepreneurs in Philadelphia's Innovative Economy

#### MODERATOR

##### TEMPEST CARTER

*Director, Strategic Tech Initiatives, Office of Business Development, Department of Commerce*

Tempest Carter is a lifelong Philadelphian and has been committed to increasing the economic viability and equity of this city. She is a graduate of Temple University (BA Economics with a minor in Spanish) and views Philadelphia as a growing epicenter for Equitable Tech. She fell in love with economic development while serving in the United States Peace Corps (Panama 2012-2014) where she worked with small village-based businesses to expand their markets for artisan goods. After serving in the Peace Corps, she spent 10+ years in the Community Economic Development field connecting with and advocating for small businesses throughout the city at Community Development Corporations such as Esperanza, The Enterprise Center, and ACHIEVEability. She currently serves as the Director of Strategic Tech Initiatives for the City of Philadelphia's Department of Commerce. In her role, she develops strategic vision and implementation to attract, retain, and scale tech businesses in Philadelphia while being on the forefront of ecosystem cultivation. She has been responsible for deploying over 3.2 million dollars to support the tech ecosystem, with a particular focus on historically marginalized founders.

#### PANELIST

##### LILLY CHEN

*President & CEO, FHS Technology*

Lily Chen is a visionary leader at the forefront of Philadelphia's tech-driven transformation. As President & CEO of FHS Technology, Lily has built a reputation for driving innovation and creating solutions that empower businesses to thrive in an increasingly digital economy. Under her leadership, FHS Technology has evolved into a trusted partner for organizations seeking cutting-edge IT services, cybersecurity solutions, and strategic technology integration. With a career spanning over a decade in technology and business strategy, Lily combines technical expertise with a passion for entrepreneurship. Her approach centers on collaboration and empowerment, ensuring that startups and established enterprises alike have access to the tools and knowledge needed to compete globally. "Technology is more than infrastructure; it's the backbone of opportunity. My mission is to help entrepreneurs harness innovation to build sustainable, scalable businesses."

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## PANELIST

### **CHARNEY ROBINSON-WILLIAMS**

*CPO, 1PHL*

Charney Robinson-Williams is the Chief Program Officer at 1PHL, where she leads organizational culture, talent strategy, and people-centered systems that strengthen Philadelphia's workforce and community impact. With more than 15 years of experience as an activist, impact strategist, and event producer, she has advanced equity-driven initiatives across the nonprofit and social-impact sectors. Charney is the Founding Principal of Noire Impact LLC, a Certified Digital Event Strategist, and a Certified Meetings Manager. A long-standing advocate for Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI), she has held leadership roles within the NAACP, including Rutgers Chapter President and Acting President of the Camden County East Branch. She holds an MPA and a BA in Political Science & Africana Studies from Rutgers University

## PANELIST

### **IOLA HARPER**

*Executive Director, WORC*

Iola Harper is the Executive Director of the Women's Opportunities Resource Center (WORC), leading efforts to expand economic opportunity for women and underserved entrepreneurs. With over 25 years of experience in economic development, she has championed equity through entrepreneurship, access to capital, and community-driven solutions. Iola previously held senior roles at The Enterprise Center and the City of Philadelphia and serves on several boards, including the Maternity Care Coalition and The Forum of Executive Women Foundation. Recognized statewide and nationally for her leadership, she remains a dedicated advocate for inclusive economic growth.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## Leading Through Crisis: Building Resilience and Confidence for Independent Growth

### FACILITATOR

#### AHMED WHITT

*Director, Center for Wealth Equity, Living Cities*

Ahmed Whitt is a strategic leader dedicated to advancing economic equity and resilience in underserved communities. As Director of the Center for Wealth Equity at Living Cities, Ahmed spearheads initiatives that help individuals and businesses navigate uncertainty, build confidence, and achieve independent growth. His work focuses on leveraging leadership to create innovative solutions that close wealth gaps and foster long-term sustainability. With a deep commitment to equity and empowerment, Ahmed exemplifies how strong leadership during times of crisis can transform challenges into opportunities for inclusive prosperity.

## Transformational Leadership: Driving Change, Empower Teams, Unlock Creativity

### FACILITATOR

#### LOU FABIAN

*Managing Director, Webforce5*

Lou Fabian is a seasoned partnership, digital marketing, and program development professional with more than 20 years of experience driving measurable results across industries including retail, telecommunications, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, and the nonprofit sector. He is known for building and leading high-performing teams, developing talent, and delivering strategies that accelerate business growth in both corporate and digital services environments.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## Pathways to Entrepreneurial Growth: From Idea to Impact

### FACILITATOR

#### **CAMILLE SIMPKINS**

*Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC*

Camille N. Simpkins is the Senior Business Development Manager at the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), where she advances equitable economic growth by supporting businesses across Greater Philadelphia with access to capital, technical assistance, and strategic growth planning resources. Since joining PIDC in 2022 as a Relationship Manager, Camille has led impactful communications and marketing initiatives designed to help businesses invest, develop, and scale. A dedicated small business advocate, she partners closely with the City of Philadelphia's Commerce department to strengthen community-based workforce and economic development efforts. As a member of PIDC's Financial Services team, Camille works with commercial and retail businesses in every area of the city, providing the tools, knowledge, networks, financing, and real estate resources that help businesses achieve long-term success.

## Why Succession Planning Matters for Small Businesses

### FACILITATOR

#### **TIM DANIELS**

*Lead Instructor, LA21*

Tim Daniels is a dynamic workshop facilitator with LA21, where he leads practical, community-focused business education sessions designed to equip entrepreneurs with the tools they need to grow and sustain their ventures. Known for his clear teaching style and deep commitment to empowering small business owners along the Lancaster Avenue corridor, Tim helps participants build confidence, strengthen operations, and navigate real-world business challenges. His work reflects LA21's mission of fostering economic opportunity, creativity, and long-term success for local entrepreneurs.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## Leading Through Smart Pricing Strategy: Pricing Based on Value + Cost

### FACILITATOR

#### **TIM DANIELS**

*Lead Instructor, LA21*

Tim Daniels is a dynamic workshop facilitator with LA21, where he leads practical, community-focused business education sessions designed to equip entrepreneurs with the tools they need to grow and sustain their ventures. Known for his clear teaching style and deep commitment to empowering small business owners along the Lancaster Avenue corridor, Tim helps participants build confidence, strengthen operations, and navigate real-world business challenges. His work reflects LA21's mission of fostering economic opportunity, creativity, and long-term success for local entrepreneurs.

## Wealth Building: A Guide for Local Entrepreneurs

### FACILITATOR

#### **KERSEY AZOCAR**

*President & CEO, Greenline Access Capital*

Kersey Azocar leads Greenline Access Capital, a Philadelphia-based CDFI, as its President & CEO. With over 18 years in the financial industry, she built a national microlending reputation managing 13 years at a CDFI and closing more than 1,600 loans totaling \$6 million. Since founding Greenline in 2021, she has expanded its impact connecting over 45 small business clients to nearly \$3 million in loans and grants, including targeted support for Hispanic immigrant entrepreneur.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## Bridging Communities: Leadership that Connects People, Resources & Opportunity

### FACILITATOR

#### **KHINE ZAW ARTHUR**

*President & CEO, Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia*

Khine Zaw Arthur is an award-winning entrepreneur and a scholar, recognized for her work in the community for women empowerment, leadership and small business development. She is the current President and CEO of the Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia AACCGP. Before joining the Chamber, Khine has served as a Senior Officer for Social Welfare, Women, Labor and Migrant Workers at Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta, Indonesia. She also worked as a news reporter at NHK World International in Tokyo from 2007-2011, while attending the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tokyo as MEXT scholar. She holds a Ph. D in Human Security. Khine began her entrepreneurial journey in the United States in 2016, founded two skincare companies. She founded the businesses with a mission to support single-mothers, survivors of domestic violence and sex trafficking, provided various resources including employment opportunities, counseling and business training. Khine loves to cook, enjoys doing yoga and travels often with her family.

# LOCAL BUSINESS

*Strengthening Communities Through Local Enterprise*

DAY THREE

Tuesday  
May 19, 2026



## PROGRAM AGENDA

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM

**REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING BREAKFAST**

9:00 AM - 9:10 AM

**OPENING REMARKS**

Salim Wilson, *Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Business Success*  
Michelle Price, *Senior Director, Mayor's Business Action Team, Office of Business Success, Department of Commerce*  
Camille Simpkins, *Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC*

9:10 AM - 9:20 AM

**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT**

**Strengthening Communities Through Local Enterprise**

Denis Murphy, *Deputy Commerce Director, TCB*

9:20 AM - 10:20 AM

**PLENARY PANEL**

**Community at the Core | Driving Growth Through Local Enterprise**

**Moderator** - Sherrill Berks, *Fuse Fellow, Department of Commerce*

**Panelists:**

John Gerber, *Founder and Principal, Unlawyer Inc.*  
Varsovia Fernandez, *CEO & President, PA CDFI Network*

10:20 AM - 11:20 AM

**BREAK OUT SESSIONS**

*Choose your Path to Empowerment*

**Unlocking Opportunity: Capital, Capacity and Contracting**

Nadir Jones, *Director, Business Impact & Supplier Diversity*  
David Cayemitte, *CEO, Minority Business Development Institute*

**Community Connections: Building Partnerships that Last**

Casey O'Donnell, *CEO, Impact Services*

**Marketing with Meaning: Telling Your Local Story**

Johnstone Sisters, *Food Chasers*

**Innovation on a Budget: Creative Solutions for Small Businesses**

Jarde Allen, *President & CEO, In the Moment Financial Services*  
Shanshan Ma, *Director, Tax Prep Program, Office of Neighborhood Economic Development, Department of Commerce*



**PLENARY PANEL**

**Building Stronger Communities: The Local Business Advantage**

**Moderator:** Solomon Jones, *Radio Host, WURD*

**11:20 AM - 12:20 PM**

**Panelist:**

Aiisha Herring, *Deputy Director, Rebuild, Business & Workforce Development*

Philip Dawson, *Director, Mt. Airy CDC*

Darryl Thomas, *Owner, Philly Cuts*

**12:20 PM - 1:20 PM**

**NETWORKING LUNCH**

**THE BUSINESS BEHIND THE BEAT**

**Building Culture, Commerce & Connection**

**Moderator:** Dayne Jordan | *MC & Recording Artist*

**Speaker:** Jeffrey Allen Townes (*Jazzy Jeff*), *Record Producer/Actor*

**1:20 PM - 2:20 PM**

**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

*Choose your Path to Growth*

**The Local Multiplier Effect: Small Businesses Matter**

Giovanna Vilomar, *Micro Loan Consulting Manager, Finanta*

**Stronger Books, Stronger Business**

Candice Wright, *CEO, We Rise Business Solution*

Shanshan Ma, *Director, Tax Prep Program, Office of Neighborhood Economic Development, Department of Commerce*

**2:20 PM - 3:20 PM**

**Building Your Team the Right Way: W-2's vs. 1099 Essentials for Local Businesses**

Kafi Hakim, *Owner, KMM Tax & Accounting Services*

**The Power to Show Up: Ring It On + Philly Access**

Elka Battle Murillo, *VP President 2026 Initiatives*

Tyrone Dixon, *Deputy Director 2026, Office of City Representatives, City of Philadelphia*



## SECOND ANNUAL BUSINESS SUMMIT AND EXPO PITCH COMPETITION

### The Local Enterprise Pitch Competition

3:20 PM - 4:30 PM

**Moderator:** Tanya Morris, *President & Founder, Mom Your Business (MYB)*

**Judges:**

Salim Wilson, *Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Business Success*

Jeffrey Allen Townes (Jazzy Jeff), *Record Producer/Actor*

David Egan, *Regional VP Comcast Business*

4:30 PM - 5:00 PM

### CLOSING SESSION

#### Call to Action

Camille Simpkins, *Senior Business Development Manager, PIDC*

## SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

### Leadership Insight

#### Strengthening Communities Through Local Enterprise

##### SPEAKER

##### DENIS MURPHY

*Deputy Commerce Director, Taking Care of Business*

Denis Murphy leads the Taking Care of Business program, creating employment opportunities for residents while keeping Philadelphia's neighborhood commercial corridors clean. The program is part of a larger effort by the Department of Commerce to enhance and promote vibrant commercial corridors. Prior joining the City, Denis completed a Masters in Public Policy at the Princeton School for Public and International Affairs and worked developing affordable homeownership opportunities.

### PLENARY PANEL

#### Community at the Core: Driving Growth Through Local Enterprise

##### MODERATOR

##### SHERRILL BERKS

*FUSE Fellow, Office of Neighborhood Development, Department of Commerce*

Sherrill Berk is a strategic business development and philanthropy leader serving as a FUSE Executive Fellow with Philadelphia's Department of Commerce. She brings 25 years of experience in elevating financial health, education, and mental health initiatives securing over \$40 million in philanthropic funding and forging impactful partnerships with organizations like the National Foundation for Credit Counseling and SCORE. In her current fellowship, Sherrill is spearheading a city-led initiative to strengthen immigrant and historically disadvantaged small business ownership and generational wealth building, including a succession and real estate acquisition program tailored to immigrant entrepreneurs who comprise 36% of the city's corridor small businesses. As Principal of Berk Fundraising, she combines nonprofit and private-sector acumen to craft sustainable, equity-driven solutions that help communities thrive.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## PANELIST

### **JOHN GERBER**

*Founder and Principal, Unlawyer Inc.*

John Gerber is the Founder & Principal of Unlawyer Inc. He leads a boutique firm that partners with entrepreneurs and growing companies to deliver strategic counsel and integrated legal support. In addition to his legal career, John has built and led businesses himself, giving him firsthand entrepreneurial experience that shapes his practical, business-minded approach to advising founders. His work spans mergers and acquisitions, project finance, corporate formation, and general counsel services; known for partnering closely with emerging companies to provide strategic, long-term guidance that supports both day-to-day operations and sustainable growth.

## PANELIST

### **VARSOVIA FERNANDEZ**

*CEO & President, PA CDFI Network*

Varsovia Fernandez is the Chief Executive Officer of the Pennsylvania CDFI Network, a coalition supporting mission-driven community development financial institutions statewide. She brings twenty-five years of leadership in nonprofits, financial services, and tech to promote equitable access to capital. A recognized advocate for Hispanic cultural, governmental, and educational issues, she serves on several boards including Montgomery County Community College, Rosemont College, and The Philadelphia Award and has earned honors such as the 2018 GACLA Latino 100, the U.S. Hispanic Chamber Executive of the Year, and the Benemerenti Medal from Pope Francis. She holds a B.S. in Business Management from Rosemont College and has completed executive programs at Wharton and Kellogg.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## Plenary Panel

### Building Stronger Communities: The Local Business Advantage

#### MODERATOR

##### **SOLOMON JONES**

*Radio Host, WURD*

Solomon Jones is an award winning journalist, author, and radio host whose voice has become a cornerstone of Philadelphia's civic and cultural landscape. As a longtime host on WURD Radio, Pennsylvania's only Black owned talk radio station, he leads conversations at the intersection of community, politics, entrepreneurship, and social justice. A storyteller at heart, Jones is the author of several acclaimed books and a former columnist for The Philadelphia Inquirer, known for elevating neighborhood voices and tackling issues that shape everyday life. His work blends sharp insight with deep community commitment, making him a trusted moderator, commentator, and advocate for Philadelphia's future.

#### PANELIST

##### **AIISHA HERRING**

*Deputy Director, Rebuild, Business & Workforce Development, City of Philadelphia*

Aiisha G. Herring-Miller is the Deputy Director of Diverse Business & Workforce Development for Rebuild, the City of Philadelphia's historic capital investment program. She leads efforts to grow and support pipelines for minority and women owned firms most notably through initiatives like the Emerging Vendors Program and the marquee Rebuild Ready training series, which has supported over 90 graduating companies to win government contracts. Her work has contributed to achieving a 68% diverse participation rate among Rebuilds contracts and continues to foster equitable growth and workforce training across the city. With over 20 years in the City of Philadelphia's service, Aiisha previously served as Senior Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity and Director of Economic Development Zones within the Department of Commerce.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## PANELIST

### PHILIP DAWSON

*Director, Mt. Airy CDC*

Philip Dawson is the Executive Director of Mt. Airy CDC. Previously, Phil led the Chestnut Hill Business District, managing public space enhancements, small-business support, and tourism initiatives. Before that, he directed housing and economic development at Esperanza, where he implemented a comprehensive neighborhood plan in North Philadelphia's Hunting Park and served as Senior Director and Manager in various roles.

## PANELIST

### DARRYL THOMAS

*Darryl Thomas*

Darryl Thomas is the owner of Philly Cuts, a West Philadelphia barbershop he's run since 1997 at 44th & Chestnut. A Mill Creek native and Howard University graduate, he previously worked for the Department of Justice before launching the shop. More than a cut-up spot, Philly Cuts serves as "a meeting place for people of goodwill," offering community gathering space, jobs, and civic engagement throughout West Philly.

## The Business Behind the Beat Building Culture, Commerce & Connection

## MODERATOR

### DAYNE JORDAN

*MC & Recording Artist*

Dayne Jordan is a Philadelphia-born hip-hop artist, lyricist, and performer best known as the official MC and longtime creative collaborator of DJ Jazzy Jeff. With a career rooted in authentic storytelling and global performance, he has toured internationally, contributed to multiple Jazzy Jeff projects, and built a reputation for sharp lyricism and dynamic stage presence. Dayne is also the founder of No Place Like Home (NPLH), an independent artist platform dedicated to elevating emerging talent. His work reflects a deep commitment to artistry, independence, and representing Philadelphia on the world stage.

# SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

## SPEAKER

### **JEFFREY ALLEN TOWNES (JAZZY JEFF)**

*Record Producer/Actor*

DJ Jazzy Jeff is a renowned DJ, producer, and entrepreneur whose illustrious career spans more than three decades. His legacy boasts a DMC Championship, an Emmy Award, multiple GRAMMY Awards, American Music Awards, NAACP Image Awards, and multiple nominations. First introduced to the world as one half of DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince, his impact transcends his multi-platinum, Grammy-winning collaborations with Will Smith. Jeff is widely revered as a foundational figure in DJ culture and a vital tastemaker, influencing generations of music lovers and artists alike. As a visionary producer known for his entrepreneurial spirit rooted in community, Jeff built A Touch of Jazz, an acclaimed production company with credits including collaborations with Michael Jackson, Jill Scott, The Roots, Darius Rucker, and more. His influence has been pivotal in defining the sound and direction of R&B, neo-soul, and beyond. Jeff is forever a student of his craft, truly ahead of his time. And he continues to evolve and innovate at the intersection of music, technology, and community. Jeff was part of the first wave of content creators, chronicling his worldwide tours through his Vinyl Destination web series. In 2015, he founded the PLAYLIST Retreat, an exclusive creative gathering that unites artists to collaborate, innovate, and inspire. Then in 2020, when a global pandemic forced the world into lockdown, Jeff moved the party, literally, in-house with his signature livestream series, The Magnificent House Party. Over the course of his career, DJ Jazzy Jeff has achieved many accomplishments. But he is a humble man who is still doing it, as his 2002 hit said, "For Da Love of Da Game."

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## Unlocking Opportunity: Capital, Capacity and Contracting

### FACILITATOR

#### **NADIR JONES**

*Director, Business Impact & Supplier Diversity*

Nadir Jones is the Director of the Office of Business Impact and Economic Advancement (BIEA) under Mayor Cherelle L. Parker. He brings more than two decades of leadership in civil rights and diversity program management across the public and private sectors, including leading and expanding global supplier diversity initiatives at CBRE Group across multiple countries, with a focus on procurement strategies, compliance oversight, and supply chain diversification. He is leading a citywide effort to expand access to opportunity and drive inclusive economic growth. He oversees BIEA's core divisions, including the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Office of Business Growth, advancing procurement strategy, compliance, and supply chain diversification to increase participation in City contracting. His work is focused on strengthening pipelines, removing barriers, and delivering measurable economic impact for businesses and communities.

### FACILITATOR

#### **DAVID CAYEMITTE**

*CEO, Minority Business Development Institute*

David Cayemitte is the Founder & CEO of the Minority Business Development Institute (MBDI), where he drives training and support for minority, women, and veteran-owned construction businesses. With over 30 years in the corporate insurance sector previously serving as Vice President at Travelers and later founding The Cayemitte Group in 2005. He has led industry-first initiatives helping small firms access bonding, capital, and operational resources. David also launched MBDI University's four-year curriculum to build long-term capacity in the construction industry.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## Community Connections: Building Partnerships that Last

### FACILITATOR

#### **CASEY O'DONNELL**

*CEO, Impact Services*

Casey O'Donnell is the President & CEO of Impact Services, where he leads an organization dedicated to workforce development, housing stabilization, reentry support, and community revitalization. Under his leadership, Impact's 160-member team works to empower returning citizens, veterans, and economically disadvantaged residents. Casey also serves as President of the Impact Loan Fund, helping drive local economic growth through accessible capital. His work in Kensington centers on building safer, stronger, and more economically resilient neighborhoods by aligning community voice, public investment, and grassroots partnerships.

## Marketing with Meaning: Telling Your Local Story

### FACILITATOR

#### **MAYA AND KALA JOHNSTONE**

*FoodChasers*

Maya and Kala Johnstone, both holding EdDs and each with over 20 years leading Philadelphia schools (Maya at Wagner Middle, Kala at Edmonds Elementary), retired during the pandemic to chase their lifelong passion food and travel. In December 2021, they converted that passion into FoodChasers' Kitchen, a breakfast lunch restaurant known for its indulgent Southern-inspired dishes from shrimp & grits to a celebrity-loved "Jalen Special" cheesesteak. Their entrepreneurial journey began amid calls from followers for real food, and they seized the opportunity. Using retirement funds, a catering launch during the pandemic, and training in small businesses to open their restaurant. They've built FoodChasers not just on menus but on mission, serving as a community hub, supporting local schools through their FoodChasers Cares Foundation, and fostering a family feel for every guest.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## Innovation on a Budget: Creative Solutions for Small Businesses

### FACILITATOR

#### **JARDE' ALLEN**

*President & CEO, In the Moment Financial Services*

Jarde' Allen is the Founder & CEO of In the Moment Financial Services, a West Philadelphia based, minority and woman owned full service financial firm. She left Corporate America after 10+ years to build her own company, starting the business from her "couch" and growing it into a thriving enterprise offering tax preparation, bookkeeping, real estate coaching, and financial literacy programs. Under her leadership, In the Moment empowers minority entrepreneurs through transparent services, home buying workshops, LLC setups, and a million-dollar real estate portfolio including a community-focused financial resource center and nine rental units.

### FACILITATOR

#### **SHANSHAN MA**

*Director, Philadelphia Free Business Tax Preparation Program, Office of Neighborhood Economic Development, Department of Commerce*

Shanshan Ma is the Director of the Philadelphia Free Business Tax Preparation Program, offering free business tax preparation assistance —local, state, and federal—to small businesses earning less than \$250,000 in revenue. Services are available both virtually and in person through selected tax professionals across the city who speak multiple languages. With experience managing a food business, Shanshan is committed to helping small business owners acquire the knowledge and resources necessary for long-term success.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## The Local Multiplier Effect: Small Businesses Matter

### FACILITATOR

#### **GIOVANNE VILOMAR**

*Micro Loan Consulting Manager, Finanta*

Giovannie Vilomar is the Microloan Business Consulting Manager at Finanta, where he provides strategic guidance and technical assistance to entrepreneurs seeking microloans and early-stage capital. A seasoned financial services professional, he previously managed small business consulting initiatives and held roles including Senior Financial Services Associate at E\*TRADE and Financial Analyst at Assurant. He holds a BBA in Economics with a minor in Applied Mathematics from Kennesaw State University.

## Stronger Books, Stronger Business

### FACILITATOR

#### **CANDICE WRIGHT**

*CEO, We Rise Business Solutions*

Candace Wright is the Co-Owner and CEO of We Rise Business Solutions, a Philadelphia-based firm that provides comprehensive accounting, tax preparation, and business advisory services designed to strengthen entrepreneurs and community organizations. She has more than 15 years of corporate accounting experience, supported by her academic foundation in accounting from Temple University's Fox School of Business. A committed advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion, Candace is a graduate of the Urban League of Philadelphia Leadership Forum and currently serves as Fiscal Controller at PHMC, where she oversees the organization's multimillion-dollar anti-violence grant portfolio. She is also an active real estate investor through United Revitalization Partners, reflecting her dedication to building and uplifting communities across Philadelphia.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## FACILITATOR

### **SHANSHAN MA**

*Micro Loan Consulting Manager, Finanta*

Shanshan Ma is the Director of the Philadelphia Free Business Tax Preparation Program, which connects eligible businesses and freelancers with tax professionals across the city to offer free assistance in preparing and filing business tax returns at the local, state, and federal levels. With experience managing a food business, Shanshan is committed to helping small business owners acquire the knowledge and resources necessary for long-term success.

## **Building Your Team the Right Way: W-2's vs. 1099 Essentials for Local Businesses**

## FACILITATOR

### **KAFI HAKIM**

*Owner, KMM Tax & Accounting Services*

Kafi Hakim is the Owner of KMM Tax & Accounting Services, a woman-owned firm providing comprehensive tax preparation, accounting, bookkeeping, and outsourced CFO services to individuals and small businesses across the Greater Philadelphia region. Kafi has built a trusted practice centered on empowering entrepreneurs, strengthening financial systems, and supporting community economic growth. She began her career at Coopers & Lybrand (now PwC) as a Tax Accountant in the Personal Financial Services group, advising high-net-worth individuals, entrepreneurs, and Fortune 500 executives. Kafi went on to build specialized expertise during six years at Mitchell & Titus, LLP, serving professional athletes, entertainers, nonprofits, and growing businesses. Her corporate leadership roles include serving as Tax Manager at Comcast-Spectacor and The Siegfried Group.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS PRESENTERS

## The Power to Show Up: Ring It On + Philly Access

### FACILITATOR

#### **ELKA BATTLE MURILLO**

*Vice President, 2026 Initiatives, Philadelphia250*

Elka Battle-Murillo is the Vice President of 2026 Initiatives at Philadelphia250, the nonprofit stewarding Philadelphia's commemoration of America's 250th anniversary under the Philadelphia Visitor Center Corporation. In this role, she leads citywide planning, partnerships, and legacy projects designed to elevate Philadelphia's history, culture, and communities during the Semiquincentennial. Elka is recognized for her strategic leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and commitment to creating inclusive, future-focused celebrations that reflect the spirit and diversity of Philadelphia.

### FACILITATOR

#### **TYRONE DIXON**

*Deputy Director, Office of 2026, City of Philadelphia*

Tyrone Dixon is the Deputy Director of the Office of 2026 for the City of Philadelphia, where he helps lead the city's planning, partnerships, and civic engagement strategy for America's 250th anniversary. Working within the Office of the City Representative, he oversees cross-sector collaboration, public programming, and initiatives that elevate Philadelphia's role as the birthplace of the nation. Tyrone is recognized for his commitment to community engagement, strategic communications, and building inclusive citywide celebrations that reflect Philadelphia's diverse voices

## SECOND ANNUAL BUSINESS SUMMIT AND EXPO PITCH COMPETITION

### Pitch Off

### The Local Enterprise Pitch Off

#### MODERATOR

##### TANYA MORRIS

*President & Founder, Mom Your Business (MYB)*

Tanya T. Morris is the Founder and CEO of Mom Your Business, a Philadelphia-based organization dedicated to helping Black and Brown women entrepreneurs start, grow, and scale their businesses. A respected ecosystem builder and advocate for equitable access to capital, Tanya leads initiatives that connect women founders to mentorship, funding pathways, and strategic partnerships. She is also the creator of the Next Level Accelerator, one of the region's first accelerators designed specifically for women of color. Known for her leadership, community impact, and commitment to inclusive entrepreneurship, Tanya continues to champion opportunities that strengthen Philadelphia's small-business landscape

#### JUDGES

##### SALIM WILSON

*Deputy Commerce Director, Office of Business Services, Department of Commerce*

Salim Wilson is the Deputy Director of the Department of Commerce, Office of Business Success which oversees service excellence for small businesses through the Mayor's Business Action Team, nighttime economy initiatives and capital projects. The Office of Business Success also manages the Storefront Improvement Program, the Liberty Bell Safe Certification Program and the Business Security Camera Program. Salim has been with the Department of Commerce since 2017, first as a Business Services Manager in the Office of Business Services, where he supported businesses to start, sustain, and grow. Salim brings a wealth of experience, patience, and an outgoing personality that puts businesses at ease, and leaves them with clearer understanding and direction toward accomplishing their business goals and dreams. Before joining the City of Philadelphia, Salim dedicated over 23 years to the private, public, and nonprofit sectors providing guidance and assistance in business, accounting, contracting, finance and project management.

# SECOND ANNUAL BUSINESS SUMMIT AND EXPO PITCH COMPETITION

## JUDGES

### **JEFFREY ALLEN TOWNES (JAZZY JEFF)**

*Record Producer/Actor*

DJ Jazzy Jeff is a renowned DJ, producer, and entrepreneur whose illustrious career spans more than three decades. His legacy boasts a DMC Championship, an Emmy Award, multiple GRAMMY Awards, American Music Awards, NAACP Image Awards, and multiple nominations. First introduced to the world as one half of DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince, his impact transcends his multi-platinum, Grammy-winning collaborations with Will Smith. Jeff is widely revered as a foundational figure in DJ culture and a vital tastemaker, influencing generations of music lovers and artists alike.

As a visionary producer known for his entrepreneurial spirit rooted in community, Jeff built A Touch of Jazz, an acclaimed production company with credits including collaborations with Michael Jackson, Jill Scott, The Roots, Darius Rucker, and more. His influence has been pivotal in defining the sound and direction of R&B, neo-soul, and beyond. Jeff is forever a student of his craft, truly ahead of his time. And he continues to evolve and innovate at the intersection of music, technology, and community. Jeff was part of the first wave of content creators, chronicling his worldwide tours through his Vinyl Destination web series.

In 2015, he founded the PLAYLIST Retreat, an exclusive creative gathering that unites artists to collaborate, innovate, and inspire. Then in 2020, when a global pandemic forced the world into lockdown, Jeff moved the party, literally, in-house with his signature livestream series, The Magnificent House Party. Over the course of his career, DJ Jazzy Jeff has achieved many accomplishments. But he is a humble man who is still doing it, as his 2002 hit said, "For Da Love of Da Game."

### **DAVID EGAN**

*Regional VP Comcast Business*

David Egan is the Regional Vice President for Comcast Business in the Freedom Region, where he leads strategy, enterprise services, and business-growth initiatives across Greater Philadelphia. With more than 15 years of leadership experience at Comcast, he has overseen enterprise sales, service delivery, and large-scale customer operations, previously serving as Vice President of Enterprise Services for the Northeast Division. David is known for his results-driven approach, commitment to innovation, and support of the region's tech and business ecosystem. He holds an MBA from the Lake Forest Graduate School of Management and a degree in Economics from Northeastern Illinois University and has served on the Board of Directors for PACT, advancing entrepreneurship and innovation in Philadelphia.

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



The success of this summit would not be possible without the support, collaboration, and commitment of our valued partners. Thank you for helping us create opportunities for Philadelphia businesses, entrepreneurs, and communities to connect, learn, and grow.

Your partnership plays an important role in strengthening our local business ecosystem and supporting the continued growth of innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic opportunity throughout Philadelphia.

We are grateful for your dedication and support.

**COMCAST**  
**BUSINESS**



# DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE RESOURCES

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Department of Commerce provides access to financial support for area businesses. These are programs, organizations, and services that can help Philadelphia business owners get financial support to start or improve their businesses.



## ONE-ON-ONE BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Department of Commerce offers many kinds of one-on-one business support. Individual businesses can meet with a business services manager to get help and advice. The Mayor's Business Action Team in the Department of Commerce provides personalized assistance in multiple languages to business owners for all aspects of doing business in Philadelphia.



## SUPPORT FOR KEY INDUSTRIES

The Department of Commerce has dedicated teams that offer tailored support to attract and retain companies in key industries. We also help existing local companies expand their business. We can help you:

- **Engage with City government:** We connect companies to government services and technical assistance. We also facilitate custom business development tours, provide real estate suggestions, and offer other kinds of tailored guidance and resources. We engage companies in our decision-making efforts to make it easier to do business.
- **Understand trends:** We research the local economy and industries to inform our strategies. We can provide data on wages, real estate, talent, costs of doing business and living, and the Philadelphia market.
- **Get funding, support, and incentives:** We provide location-based incentives and financial programs for companies that create products and jobs locally. We also support startups and entrepreneurs with growth opportunities.
- **Strengthen local networks:** We connect companies with local stakeholders and organizations. We also connect employers to workforce resources and create partnerships with colleges and universities to help people of all ages build skills and enter the local talent pipeline.





Department of  
**Commerce**

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

# STAY CONNECTED

The Department of Commerce envisions Philadelphia with a globally competitive economy that benefits all people who live, work, and do business in our city.

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Stay connected with our programs, services, and resources by following @phlcommerce on social media platforms. The Department of Commerce is the economic catalyst for the City of Philadelphia. Commerce helps businesses grow and increases economic opportunity for all. Learn more:



# ACCESS PHILLY APP



Through global shared experiences, neighborhood investments, and citywide programming, the City of Philadelphia is bringing people closer together for America's 250th birthday. This celebration, rooted in pride, purpose, and progress, ensures every Philadelphian – and visitors from around the world – feels connected to this once-in-a-generation moment.

## Access Philly app

Discover 2026 celebrations, festivals, and more fun things to do across the city all summer long! Download the Access Philly mobile app, or visit the 2026 events hub for more local resources.



# NOTES



# NOTES



