

**Page: Submitter's Information**

**Chapter Name**

ACC Greater Philadelphia

**Chapter Role**

Administrator

**Who else should be copied on ACC Chapter Achievement Award related communications?**

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**Page: Achievement Award**

**Category**

Best Diversity Initiative

**Chapter Name**

ACC Greater Philadelphia

**Chapter Size**

Large (more than 851 members)

**Entry Title**

2nd Annual Diversity Summit

**Entry Description**

The Association of Corporate Counsel Greater Philadelphia (ACCGP) held its second annual Diversity Summit in December 2022 with innovative programming, novel experiences, and a structure designed to promote meaningful conversations, community engagement and practical benchmarking.

**When was the program initiated?**

12/8/2022

**What was the project objective?**

Our chapter's annual Diversity Summit had numerous objectives, including (1) to recognize and celebrate diversity in its myriad forms in our Greater Philadelphia chapter membership; (2) to foster DIEB in our community; (3) to provide a safe space and platform for sensitive conversations; (4) to offer members concrete tools to increase DIEB in their own workplaces; and (5) to facilitate meaningful connections between our members and local affinity groups so that each could act as a resource for one another. Each year we hope to build on the foundation established during prior Diversity Summits and to address timely topics impacting DIEB strategies.

### **How was the objective achieved?**

Our chapter has prioritized a focus on diversity with the intent of bringing a DIEB lens to all chapters events and programming, and the Diversity Summit serves as a key element of that strategy. We partnered with five high-level law firm sponsors to welcome and invite all chapter members to the Diversity Summit, whether or not part of a historically marginalized community.

We prioritized diversity of representation and diversity of thought in selecting our speakers to create panels reflective of our chapter membership. Our first session, ""The Intersection of DEI and ESG: Navigating Uncharted and Ever-Evolving Terrain"" set the stage for the day, examining how diversity, equity and inclusion is indispensable to companies' environmental, social, and governance strategies. The session delved into the risks inherent in performative DEI efforts and how stakeholders, employees and customers are influencing companies to implement substantive DEI initiatives. The Summit's second session, "Diversity vs. Tokenism: Drawing Parallels Between the Legal and Tech Industries"," fostered an open dialogue between our panelists and the audience. The panelists' willingness to be vulnerable spurred the audience to do the same, with both panelists and the audience alike sharing stories of instances in which intentionality in the DEI space created a more inclusive and high-performing workforce, drawing parallels between the effective efforts the tech industry has taken to increase diversity and lessons the legal profession can learn from the tech industry's efforts.

The Summit was held fully in-person, with no remote option and the event was not recorded. This created a safe space for the 100 attendees and panelists to openly share on sensitive topics, and to draw from their own lived experiences which fostered self-reflective dialogue on how each individual attendee could be a DEI champion in their respective organizations. During each panel, we also made microphones readily available along the aisles so that attendees could easily engage.

In line with our theme, Navigating DIEB in a Brave New World: From Ideas to Implementation, each session was designed to equip attendees with concrete action items and practical takeaways to navigate effective DIEB strategies in a post-pandemic environment. For instance, our later sessions covered strategies for effectively deploying DIEB, the instrumental role of vendor diversity programs and how corporations/in-house legal departments can influence diversity metrics at law firms and beyond. Panelists shared actions they or their companies/firms have taken that have been effective in moving the DIEB needle in their workplaces.

Throughout the day we also built in plenty of time for members to network and make connections. We began the day with a leisurely breakfast, purposefully scheduled extended 15 minute breaks between each session, and ended the day with a networking reception. Based on incredibly positive feedback from the prior year, our lunch session once again centered around a set of thought-provoking and conversation-starting questions at each table to encourage discussion. In addition, we extended complimentary invitations to members of local affinity groups (including Philadelphia Barristers, Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, and the Southeast Asian, Asian-Pacific and Pennsylvania Bar Associations) to attend the full day summit and speak about their organizations during lunch in order to raise awareness for attendees about diverse outside counsel, with the hopes of creating an opportunity for meaningful engagement beyond the day of the Summit. Their inspiring messages reinforced the understanding that the more connected we are, the better we are able to ensure diverse slates of candidates, build diverse pipelines at our corporations, and foster a sense of diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging within our local legal community. Finally, we extended the invitation to our 2022 class of ACCGP Diversity Interns to attend the Summit, and we were delighted that a few were able to break away from their busy final exam schedule to be with us.

### **What was the project budget?**

The project's original budget amount was \$38,000. Actual expenses were \$21,688.60.

While we recognize that this is a significant cost, we feel strongly that the increased dollars are not what made this program innovative. Instead, it is the singular support of the ACCGP Officers and Board for efforts in the DIEB space; the willingness of our law firm sponsors to trust us enough to dive in on sensitive and sometimes controversial issues; our commitment to bringing timely and cutting-edge problems and solutions to the Greater Philadelphia legal community's attention; and the consistent efforts to engage and include that community beyond the "in-house club" – particularly as it pertains to traditionally marginalized groups. Putting on a professional, polished and engaging event for upward of 100 attendees in a major metropolitan area is not necessarily a free or low-cost endeavor, but we were always thoughtful and judicious about how we allocated our funds to have the greatest impact and were able to come in well under budget.

### **What obstacles were faced while doing this project/program?**

The most significant obstacle was having our second Summit in the same calendar year as the inaugural event (which was postponed from our original event date in December 2021 to February 2022 due to concern over rising COVID-19 infection rates). With the events held in such close proximity to one another (less than 10 months apart), the planning committee was faced with the challenge of continuing to evolve the content so topics would be fresh, new, and attractive to our membership.

We also focused on driving attendance during an exceptionally busy end-of year period. Accordingly, we needed to make sure it was well-publicized and that it didn't blend into all of the other similar events that were being held throughout the legal profession. We were acutely aware that members may have felt this was "just another unconscious bias training", and we were committed to remaining innovative and providing attendees with a unique opportunity to grow in this space. This drove us to find a bold theme ("Navigating DIEB in a Brave New World: From Ideas to Implementation") for the event that communicated our intent to deliver more advanced and meaningful content with practical tools and strategies for a post-COVID landscape.

### **What is the long-term impact of your initiative to the local/global ACC community?**

The long-term impact of our initiative is forging another step in the ongoing dialogue around the important issues of diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging. As a chapter of a global ACC organization that champions those critical principles, ACCGP is honored to continue to elevate and expand the discussion within the legal community about the ever-evolving landscape of DIEB. We hope our Summit serves as an example to all ACC chapters on what is possible when you create a safe space for lively and robust discussion on sensitive topics – building toward a more diverse, inclusive and equitable world one conversation at a time.

**In 350 words or less, please state how this project was innovative.**

We strove to make our program innovative and an elevated experience throughout. Back by popular demand, the day once again began with a burst of energy with a drumline played by students from Musicopia, a local organization whose mission is to provide opportunities for underserved children to experience, learn, perform, and appreciate music. We then had two dynamic sessions before lunch, including one that skillfully connected DIEB and the hot topic of ESG in new ways for the audience.

We thoughtfully engaged local affinity groups to help our members source diverse talent and build inclusive pipelines. Our interactive lunch discussion activity (a new set of prompt questions were provided) allowed attendees to share in real-time and a small group setting what their organizations were doing to move the DIEB needle – and compare notes on what was/wasn't working. This section of the day received rave reviews last year and we were pleased to bring it back this year! Attendees were once again highly engaged and enthusiastic about their "table talks."

Three more sessions followed lunch. One built off a session during the inaugural summit and reviewed the results of our benchmarking survey, which was completed by our member organizations, and identifies DIEB strategies and initiatives, and measured progress year over year.

Another session was led by Chief DEI Officers and provided insight into ways to advocate for DEI programs within your company, tools to measure the impact of DEI initiatives, and practical tips for leveraging employee-led associations to foster diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.

We made a concerted effort to offer different formats for the sessions, ranging from a single keynote-style speaker, to a fireside chat, to a traditional panel with moderator. This thoughtful variety also contributed to a high level of audience engagement and participation.

The day ended with a cocktail reception featuring a string quartet comprised of youth from Musicopia.

We are proud of ACCGP's commitment to DIEB, and look forward to building on the innovative success of this event!