

The National Urban League's Urban Apprenticeship Jobs Program Partnering with the Wireless Infrastructure Association: A Case Study on an Industry Association to Create a Pathway for Diversity & Inclusion in Apprenticeship

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Wireless Infrastructure Apprenticeship Access Initiative



National
Urban League

MMTC
Multicultural Media, Telecom
& Internet Council

WIA
Wireless
Infrastructure
Association

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Innovative Platforms for Diverse Business Interactions

Executive Summary

The purpose for this case study is to document the relevant role the Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA), an industry trade association, plays in promoting diversity and inclusion. One effective platform for WIA to showcase its role, commitment and understanding in this area is through hosting WIA's Wireless Infrastructure Show and Supplier Diversity Summit.

WIA believes the Supplier Diversity Summit attracts increased numbers of diverse companies, resulting in enhanced understanding of the wireless industry and greater opportunity for engagement with potential business partners.

The success of the Summit is measured in part by the number of registered diverse companies, diverse speakers, diverse panelists, and match-making participants. Additionally, WIA seeks information about any resulting business engagements.

Equally important, the 2017 Show included participation from the Wireless Infrastructure Apprenticeship Access Initiative (WIAAI) Consortium Partners; namely, the National Urban League (NUL), WIA, and the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC). WIA believed their participation would further the goal of increasing diversity and inclusion within the wireless industry by engaging these experts in critical discussions on topics such as apprenticeship.



WIAAI – What Is It?

Wireless Infrastructure Apprenticeship Access Initiative (WIAAI) is designed to cultivate opportunities in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. The National Urban League (NUL) leads a national group of organizations working with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeships to develop national and regional “opportunity partnerships” that expand Registered Apprenticeships. Two national partners – Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA) and Multicultural Media,

Goal of WIAAI

WIAAI has two primary goals: Its first goal is to create Registered Apprenticeships in vocations focused on building, repairing and servicing the nation's wireless infrastructure, which in turn will create livable wage jobs for underrepresented populations. To meet the demand for apprenticeable occupations, additional candidates must be considered. Working with

Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC), along with seven (7) NUL Affiliates collectively have a wide variety of services and expertise that employers may consider as resources to support implementation and future expansion of their Registered Apprenticeship Program, while ensuring greater diversity and inclusion. In October 2017, to kick off year two of WIAAI, NUL will expand its affiliate involvement to an additional thirty-one (31) locations, and therefore, cover a significant part of the ApprenticeshipUSA footprint.

employer partners, WIAAI will evaluate options intended to broaden outreach and access to additional candidates and seek to find means to supplement employer recruiting efforts. WIAAI's second goal is to leverage a set of regional partnerships, consisting principally of Urban League Affiliates, to recruit underrepresented populations for the resulting employment opportunities.

Supporting Diverse Companies

The Wireless Infrastructure Association supports the diverse community of companies that make up the nation's wireless ecosystem by providing its members and the industry with dedicated resources, advocacy, expertise and networking through a variety of activities and events. One such event is the Annual Wireless Infrastructure Show

Supplier Diversity Summit

Supplier Diversity Summit History

WIA sponsored its first ever Supplier Diversity Summit in 2016, in Dallas, Texas. This successful event was replicated at WIA's Second Annual Supplier Diversity Summit in 2017 in Orlando, Florida. Plans are currently underway for the 2018 Summit to be held in Charlotte, NC.

Purpose of the Supplier Diversity Summit

The purpose of WIA's Supplier Diversity Summit is to promote diversity and inclusion by providing a forum for many diverse businesses to acquire additional knowledge about the wireless industry, to participate as thought leaders, and to meet other companies for business relationships.

and Supplier Diversity Summit. The diversity of WIA's membership and events includes large, small, women-owned, minority-owned and veteran-owned businesses. WIA leads the industry in hosting national events and networking for new business development opportunities for wireless companies and the organizations that support them.

Supplier Diversity Summit Objective

The objective of the WIA Supplier Diversity Summit is to provide a forum for insightful dialogue for all types of businesses, large and small, about the confluence of diversity, inclusion and opportunity as predicates for business success and innovation in Information Communication Technologies (ICT).

Desired Outcomes

WIA anticipates that conferees will better understand diversity and inclusion as a core corporate value and contributor to corporate profitability and economic prosperity. The Summit is also expected to provide a networking platform for diverse companies and vendors participating at the annual conference.



WIA's Commitment to Diversity

Diversity and inclusion is a cornerstone of WIA's commitment to the core values of workplace equality, and serves as a pathway for increased returns on investments and greater innovation for its members and partners. The Supplier Diversity Summit provided the forum for insightful dialogue about the confluence of diversity, inclusion and opportunity as predicates for workplace innovation and business success. Speakers and panelists focused on ways in which all companies can improve their workforce capacity by hiring more veterans, woman and diverse populations through strategies such as apprenticeships and company-on-the-job specialized training initiatives, and by increasing business relationships with diverse companies in wireless-related areas.

The Summit provided a unique opportunity for suppliers to conduct one-on-one private meetings with diverse companies. Private "match-making" interviews provide the opportunity for diverse and majority companies to interact with multiple companies for potential business relationships at one venue. For diverse firms, the opportunity to meet several potential partners at one event creates a huge savings of marketing expenditures, an area where diverse businesses often lack necessary resources to compete effectively for many procurement opportunities that fall within their core competencies and business growth strategies.

Speakers and Panelists

The Supplier Diversity Summit was kicked-off in 2017 by the President of WIA, and former Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Jonathan Adelstein. The keynote speaker for the opening session was the former Acting Chair and current commissioner of the FCC, the Honorable Mignon Clyburn. Commissioner Clyburn spoke passionately about apprenticeship and the importance of a diverse workforce and diverse business community to support the growing needs generated by the explosive expansion of the information age.

Supplier Diversity Summit Theme

WIA selected as its theme for its 2017 Supplier Diversity Summit: *Diversity and Inclusion- A Pathway for Workforce and Business Innovation*. This was an appropriate and timely theme due in part to the work of WIA's workforce development partner consortium known as WIAAI. WIA's

annual event was the ideal venue to generate increased corporate awareness and support for this important initiative. The panel was moderated by Dr. Ronald Johnson, WIA's Senior Advisor and Strategist for Diversity and Inclusion, and panelists included two diverse businesses (women and minority), Director of FCC Office of Communications Business Opportunities, and a major telecom carrier.

To align with the Diversity Summit theme, the panel addressed four important issues:

1. Infrastructure opportunity (industry, government) as an enabler of diversity and workforce development.
2. Best practices to engage industry in embracing strategies for diversity & inclusion.
3. Best practices of aligning buyers and diverse suppliers for business opportunities.
4. Best practices to align apprenticeship programs with employers to fill growing and unmet workforce needs.

Match-Making at the Supplier Diversity Summit

The Summit showcased its highly successful 2016 and 2017 match-making forums that align corporate buyers and diverse suppliers to meet the increased demand for wireless infrastructure products and services driven by 5G, the internet of things, FirstNet and other federal initiatives on the horizon.

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WIA supplier diversity match-making extends beyond the Annual Show and Diversity Summit. Throughout the year, WIA promotes business relationships among its members, and the wireless industry generally. We have evidence that agreements between companies of various types create win-win benefits for each company.



Apprenticeship-Focused Sessions

Deb Bennett, WIA’s Director, Office of Apprenticeship developed and moderated two informative interactive panel sessions. Both sessions were enthusiastically participated in by conferees.

The first session was, *Advancing Apprenticeship as a Workforce Development Strategy*. This session provided an opportunity for companies to engage with WIA as the National Sponsor. The session was intended to assist companies by identifying resources and partners that can help to develop and sustain Registered Programs in Apprenticeship.

Session two was entitled: *TIRAP Standards of Apprenticeship Review*. The panelists, composed of subject matter experts from the private sector and DOL Office of Apprenticeship, focused on WIA’s National Standards of Apprenticeship including the following areas:

- I. Work Process Schedules for six occupations
- II. ETA-671, Apprenticeship Agreement
- III. Affirmative Action Plan
- IV. Qualifications & Selection Procedures
- V. TIRAP Bylaws
- VI. Employer Acceptance Agreement

Accelerator Session

The focus sessions were immediately followed by an employer “Accelerator Session” intended to take specific questions from existing and prospective employers and work through questions from potential sponsors about embracing apprenticeship on an accelerated basis within their organizations. Participants in this session were afforded the opportunity to interact directly with several subject matter experts from WIAAI, industry and DOL/OA.

Lessons Learned & Next Steps

WIA believes that involving WIAAI partners and DOL/OA in the Wireless Infrastructure Show as panelists, session discussants and general attendees laid the foundation for its members to understand the added value of Sponsored Apprenticeships to their organizations’ economic bottom line. WIA also learned that NUL Affiliates serve as viable local gateways to WIA members, and could be designation points for sustained interaction at the regional and local level for building a national network of Apprenticeship Sponsors.

Going forward, WIA intends to collect valuable data from a number of diverse participants, successful business relationships developed, and Sponsored Apprenticeships established within its membership and affiliate base as a result of the Show.

Additionally, WIA will identify diverse suppliers from its data base of Summit attendees and other sources that have interest in WIAAI’s apprenticeship initiatives. Also, WIA will include appropriated information about WIAAI’s apprenticeship initiative in public announcements about the Show and Diversity Summit. The aggregation and analyses of this data will help to create the foundation for an improved 2018 WIA Diversity Summit, and in future years. The next Summit is scheduled for Charlotte, North Carolina, home to one of the NUL affiliates scheduled to join WIAAI in October. Although Charlotte is not currently an affiliate member of WIAAI, its successful work in establishing earn-to-learn pathways is the subject of a companion NUL case study presented under its DOL OA’s national equity partner contract.

[About](#)

[National Urban League](#)

The National Urban League is an historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment in order to elevate the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities. Founded in 1910 and headquartered in New York City, the National Urban League spearheads the efforts of its local affiliates through the development of programs, public policy research and advocacy. Today, the National Urban League has 88 affiliates serving 300 communities, in 36 states and the District of Columbia, providing direct services that impact and improve the lives of more than 2 million people nationwide.

[Wireless Infrastructure Association](#)

The Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA) represents the businesses that develop, build, own and operate the nation's wireless infrastructure. Members include wireless carriers, infrastructure providers, and professional

services firms that collectively own and operate telecommunications facilities around the globe. Through public affairs and advocacy efforts – on the local, state and federal level – WIA works to support the widespread deployment of wireless infrastructure in order to enable wireless broadband everywhere.

[MMTC](#)

The Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) is a non-partisan, national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving equal opportunity and social justice in the mass media, telecom and broadband industries, and closing the digital divide. With a 30-year track record of increasing diversity in media and telecommunications access, ownership, and employment, MMTC is generally recognized as the nation's leading advocate for multicultural advancement in communications. MMTC develops and implements the curriculum, technical assistance, and training and marketing materials for DOL-approved occupations under the WIAAI Consortium, and conducts program evaluation.

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