

JUNE 22 & 24, 2020

Black Entrepreneurship Roundtable Summary

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

Colin McClean, Black Boys Code

Esmahan Abdallah, Bunow Designs

Funke Smith, Skillcity

Jacey Soderberg, Black Boys Code

Jeanel Alvarado, RetailBoss Inc.

John Ntirenganya Hussein, APIRG

Keenan Pascal, Token Naturals

Kevin M'Pindou, AthleThrive

Kevin Mpunga, Elev Homes Inc.

Lanre Adebambo, Airtrail

Lorna Mutegyeki, Msichana Inc.

Robert Tyndale, Version Me Media

Robin Mwesigye, RentWhiz Inc.

Sahr Saffa, C-Tribe

NEEDS

- A** Meaningful relationships with mentors in the ecosystem
- B** Representation in marketing from Startup and other channels. Current marketing materials lack Black founders or other representation, etc.
- C** Direct communication from Startup/other leaders in the ecosystem in building relationships with Black association leaders and founders
- D** Networking events should be more considerate of others (for example, Muslim women who do not drink. Bear their comforts/discomforts in mind)
- E** Ways to overcome and eliminate biases when applying for funding
- F** Workspace for meetings, etc.
- G** Champions of knowledge. Not enough potential Black founders are even getting to the first ideation stage. There is a lack of champions of knowledge sharing in their communities
- H** Invitations to Black founders for networking events and space

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 **Conduct case studies to highlight/champion Black founders/startups**

Conduct a case study and amplify a Black Founder and champion in the Black ecosystem. For example: “Keenan Pascal, Founder of Token Naturals, a long-time member of Startup Edmonton who has created scalable products that are distributed globally, is creating technologies which are impacting the cannabis industry.”

2 **Partner with other Black organizations for a Black-specific cohort for programs**

Organizations such as the National Black Coalition of Canada (NBCC) are looking to sponsor support organizations to run the programs for Black tech founders, such as DMZ. This will allow for additional resources to serve Black founders for valuable program components that differs from their counterparts. This allows for relationship building between entrepreneur support organizations and NBCC, knowledge sharing, information access, and a tailored approach to Black founders.

3 **Tackle the funding issue**

Connect with institutions that are Black focused, as well as high net-worth individuals in the Black community to create funding and financial tools that are primarily targeted toward Black founders. Delve into traditional funding entities to uproot and dismantle the systemic racism that presides over choices to extend economic opportunities to underrepresented groups.

4 **Build relationships with the Black community/organizations by leveraging resources**

Support Black founders by availing space on occasion for networking, events etc. In turn more Black founders will educate their communities about the need for and accessibility of programming.

5 **Knowledge sharing through grassroots outreach**

Build confidence in potential Black founders through communication and outreach led by Black community leaders/champions.

6 **Capture awareness through communication**

Communicate using familiar language in marketing campaigns that utilizes accessible language. This means using clear language, less jargon, include Black representation in media and stories, and to promote Black businesses by putting our stamp on them to amplify their voices through more channels.

7 **Actively invite Black founders and organizations to networking events**

A very simple way to build stronger relationships with Black community groups is to make a conscious effort to invite them to and make them feel welcomed into networking spaces and events.

8 **Host Black student groups and community boards**

Actively make events and host tours to start building relationships with students and community boards in the Black entrepreneur community. This also build connections among Black professionals.

9 **Have more inclusive events such as the 2015 Super Party Block Party**

Relationships are formed easily in such settings that host numerous events that can bring together diverse groups of people from different sectors to engage in entrepreneurship in a fun and insightful forum.

10 **Be cognizant of introverted founders when event planning**

Build events that are welcoming and allow engagement for different personality types, especially for Black founders, where introverts may not have the same access or be as welcomed as others.