

# Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE)

## 2023

### Year 3 Impact Report



Lead Organization



Academic Partner



SILICON VALLEY EXECUTIVE CENTER  
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

Funders



**BlackRock**





# ADN BOARD AND TEAM

## About African Diaspora Network

Founded in 2010, African Diaspora Network (ADN) is a Silicon Valley-based nonprofit that promotes entrepreneurship and economic development on the African continent and in the communities where we live.

We bring together Africans on the continent, in the diaspora, and friends of Africa to actualize their full potential, activate their entrepreneurial spirit, and strategically mobilize financial and intellectual resources to ensure a brighter future for the African continent.

## ADN Board

**JOSH GHAIM, Ph.D.**, Founder and Managing Partner, Ignite Venture Studio

**RAJ AJI**, General Counsel and Compliance Officer, BILL

**TWUM DJIN**, Head of Engineering, Stripe Issuing

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**ALMAZ NEGASH**, Founder & Executive Director, African Diaspora Network

**INNOCENT SHUMBA**, US-West EY Private Leader and Assurance Partner, Ernst & Young

**KEDEST TESFAGIORGIS**, Deputy Director of Global Partnerships & Grand Challenges, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

**AGNIESZKA WINKLER**, Founder, Winkler Group

**MANOJ JAIN**, Chief Financial Officer, SingleStore

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**TRAVIS ADKINS**, President and CEO, U.S. African Development Foundation

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**RUMA BHAGAT**, Senior Science Leader, Health Equity & Population Science, Product Development Medical Affairs Genentech, Inc.

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**ROLAND PEARSON**, Director, Economic Growth (Finance & Investment) at Palladium: Make It Possible

**ELLA-TAMAR ADHANAN**, Senior Vice President at Silicon Valley Bank, Division of First Citizens Bank

## ADN Team

**ALMAZ NEGASH**, Founder & Executive Director, African Diaspora Network

**DANIEL HARTZ**, Finance & Operations Advisor and Founding Board Member

**OMOLAYO NKEM OYUDO**, Director of Programs and Operations

**MEGAN HUNSBERGER**, Associate Director of Programs and Operations

**BRETT L. CAVE**, Entrepreneurship Programs Manager

**YINKA DJIN**, Information Technology Associate

## ABLE Program Advisory Committee



**Jackie Bouvier Copeland**  
Founder, President and,  
CEO, The Wise Fund, Black  
Philanthropy Month



**Joyce Chung**  
President,  
Makahakama  
Foundation



**Nousheen Eslambolchi**  
Chief of Staff,  
Visby Medical



**Helen Kim**  
Operations and Product  
Design Strategist



**Thane Kreiner**  
Co-Founder, Black  
Corporate Board Readiness  
Program



**Dr. Michael Moscherosch**  
Founder, The Periodic  
Element



**Lyndon Mouton**  
Sr. VP of Corporate  
Development, The  
LongBoard Group



**Cindy Owyong**  
VP of Diversity, Equity  
and Inclusion, BILL.com



**Guy Primus**  
CEO and Board  
Member, Valence



**Ahmad Thomas**  
CEO, Silicon Valley  
Leadership Group

## ABLE Program Leads



**Almaz Negash,**  
Founder & Director, African  
Diaspora Network



**Dennis Lanham,**  
Lead Academic Advisor; Sr. Assistant Dean and  
Executive Director, Silicon Valley Executive Center,  
Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University



**Heather Buffington-Anderson,**  
Program Director of DEI Initiatives,  
Silicon Valley Executive Center,  
Santa Clara University



**Brett L. Cave**  
Entrepreneurship Programs Manager,  
African Diaspora Network



**Omolayo Nkem Oyudo**  
Director of Programs and Operations,  
African Diaspora Network



**Megan Hunsberger**  
Associate Director of Programs and Operations,  
African Diaspora Network

# ABLE Impact Highlight

African Diaspora Network is proud to present the Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE) Year 3 Impact Report.

This comprehensive overview captures the second iteration of ADN's accelerator program dedicated to supporting Black entrepreneurs in the United States. This report highlights the journey and impact upon the entrepreneurs, with the following highlights and takeaways noted among their experiences:

## Pitch Preparation and Practice

"It takes guts and grit for any entrepreneur to overcome obstacles and succeed. For African American entrepreneurs, having someone to turn to as they confront those obstacles can be challenging. We support ABLE as they provide critical resources and mentorship to help the next generation of African American entrepreneurs succeed. The energy and innovation these entrepreneurs bring is impressive, and we're excited to support them."

—René Lacerte, CEO and Founder of BILL.

- » Increased network
- » Better understanding of the VC process
- » How to develop a pitch deck
- » How to communicate your value proposition

## Broadening Networks and Making Connections

"The Leavey School of Business's Silicon Valley Executive Center at Santa Clara University is proud to be the academic partner of the ABLE program with the African Diaspora Network. This program resonates with the Jesuit Catholic value of social justice and we are committed to addressing the funding gap for Black founders. We have enjoyed working with the ABLE Entrepreneurs in Cohort 3 and are excited to accompany each of them on their entrepreneurial journeys."

— Dennis Lanham, Senior Assistant Dean and Executive Director of the Silicon Valley Executive Center at Santa Clara University

- » Helping expand our network
- » Connections to other founders
- » A platform to meet with new investors
- » Building community with fellow Black entrepreneurs

## Support with Scaling

"Fostering economic growth relies on the pivotal steps of training, mentoring, and investing in Black entrepreneurs. The remarkable diversity and talent showcased by the participants of the Accelerating Black Leadership & Entrepreneurship (ABLE) program fill us with immense pride. They stand as living proof of the potential that exists within our community, poised to create a significant impact and flourish. The ABLE program serves as a model, demonstrating how addressing the distinctive requirements of Black founders can effectively bridge the opportunity divide and pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive, and equitable future for all."

— Almaz Negash, Founder and Executive Director of ADN.

- » Mentorship
- » Leadership skills and building teams
- » Thinking long-term about my business venture

ABLE Year 3 graduated eleven entrepreneurs who are now a part of the ABLE alumni network. We congratulate these founders and look forward to serving as a resource and providing a community as they continue to strengthen their ventures and scale.



# About ABLE

## Preparing the Next Generation of Black Entrepreneurs

Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE) is an enterprise accelerator program designed to strengthen, energize, and support startups and small businesses led by Black entrepreneurs in the United States.

Adapted from ADN's Builders of Africa's Future program that celebrates innovation and impact among early-stage African enterprises, ABLE identifies up to Black business leaders catalyzing an array of sustainable solutions to poverty across multiple sectors at the local and national level.

The program is designed to expand economic pathways and advance entrepreneurial efforts through online and in-person training and mentorship that supports the adaptation and innovations of Black entrepreneurs within the current global pandemic and changing economic climate.



### Enterprises emerging from this partnership will:

- » Highlight the challenges faced by Black-owned businesses in the U.S.
- » Showcase the ingenuity and innovation of Black-owned businesses
- » Build a network of fellow Black entrepreneurs
- » Provide investment-ready solutions for investors interested in a curated pipeline of community-driven entrepreneurial solutions to local and global challenges.

### Program Goals:

- » Provide a platform for the development of Black entrepreneurs and Black-owned businesses in the U.S.
- » Provide mentoring and networking to learn from industry leaders and open the doors to potential partnerships and funding opportunities.
- » Provide a voice and forum for the recognition of Black entrepreneurs and Black-owned businesses in the U.S.
- » Promote business networking ties between U.S. Black entrepreneurs and African entrepreneurs.

## What's the Buzz? | The ABLE Monthly Newsletter



The ABLE Newsletter serves as a dynamic and essential communication tool within our thriving community. Designed to keep our members informed, engaged, and inspired, the newsletter plays a pivotal role in fostering connections, sharing success stories, and providing valuable resources.

### Importance:

1. **Community Building:** The newsletter is a key element in fostering a sense of belonging and community among ABLE alumni and stakeholders. It serves as a virtual gathering space, connecting like-minded entrepreneurs on a regular basis.
2. **Information Dissemination:** Keeping our community well-informed is crucial. The newsletter serves as a hub for updates on program developments, alumni achievements, and relevant industry news, ensuring that everyone stays in the loop.
3. **Resource Sharing:** From insightful articles to upcoming events, the newsletter is a valuable resource library. It provides a centralized platform for sharing knowledge, tools, and opportunities that contribute to the continued growth and success of our members.
4. **Celebrating Success:** The newsletter shines a spotlight on the achievements of ABLE entrepreneurs. By celebrating success stories, we not only recognize individual accomplishments but also inspire others within the community.

### Target Audience:

The primary audience for the ABLE Newsletter includes ABLE program alumni, mentors, partners, and supporters. By tailoring content to the diverse needs and interests of this audience, we aim to create a publication that resonates and adds value to their entrepreneurial journey.

### Key Points:

- **Regular Updates:** The newsletter will be distributed on a regular basis, providing consistent updates and insights to keep the community engaged.
- **Interactive Features:** The newsletter will include interactive elements such as Q&A session information, spotlight interviews, and articles to encourage participation and engagement.
- **Event Highlights:** Stay informed about upcoming events, workshops, and opportunities within the ABLE community and beyond.

In summary, the ABLE Newsletter is more than just a communication tool; it's a reflection of our commitment to the continued growth, success, and interconnectedness of our vibrant ABLE community.

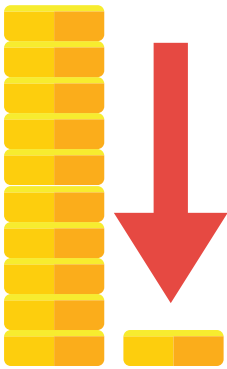
[Click here to sign up](#) for the ABLE monthly newsletter.

## Context

Systemic barriers translate into a steep price Black entrepreneurs must pay to become entrepreneurs. Minority enterprises begin with underlying wealth disparities, with the average **Black median family income ten times less than the median net worth for white families.**

As a result, Black businesses have less capacity to bootstrap their businesses with resources from friends and family, credit card debt, and access to debt capital, starting with almost three times less in overall capital than new white-owned businesses. This gap rarely closes as firms mature, which may explain why Black entrepreneurs are more likely to drop out after starting a business.

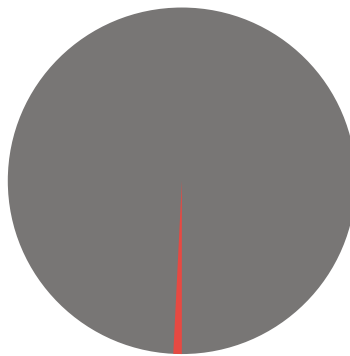
**One percent of venture-backed businesses are Black**, at least in part because of unconscious bias and pattern recognition on the part of investors. Disconnects occur between the cost of capital available for Black entrepreneurs through credit and other debt and their ability to access it, explaining why many Black entrepreneurs who need financing do not even seek it. Black businesses are much less likely to have a formal relationship with a bank and Black entrepreneur loan requests are **three times less likely to be approved** than those of white entrepreneurs. Early-stage Black entrepreneurs also lack relationships and networks that could help them access funding. Moreover, most accelerators today serve a non-diverse population.



Black median family income

**10X**

less than white families.



**1%**

of venture-backed businesses  
are Black



Black entrepreneur  
loan requests

**3X**

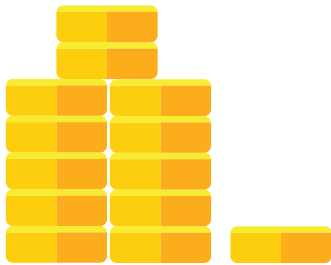
less likely to be approved

## The Opportunity

Despite these disadvantages in building wealth and incomes, minority entrepreneurs have managed to create **4.7 million jobs in the last decade**. Realized financial returns from investments in minority-owned businesses exceed those from white-owned ventures. The **median net worth for Black business owners is twelve times higher than Black non-business owners**. Indeed, as people of color collectively surpass white people in the U.S. population by 2040, investing in racial justice by mitigating, if not eliminating these barriers to racial and wealth equity is in fact an obvious opportunity for any organization with an interest in getting in on the ground floor of America's future economic growth and building thriving communities.

According to Bloomberg and Business Insider, 2021 marked a notable rise in interest and support of Black-owned businesses following the murder of George Floyd that galvanized communities in 2020. Between February 2020 and August 2021, Black Americans became the fastest-rising group of entrepreneurs in the United States, **increasing by 38%**. Despite this increase, the media attention and support for Black businesses has waned overtime and promised capital has been slow to follow.

In its second year, the Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE) program provided the continuity of support needed by Black entrepreneurs across the United States.



Black business owners net worth

**12X↑**

than Black non-business owners



**38%**

increase in Black American  
entrepreneurs between February  
2020 and August 2021



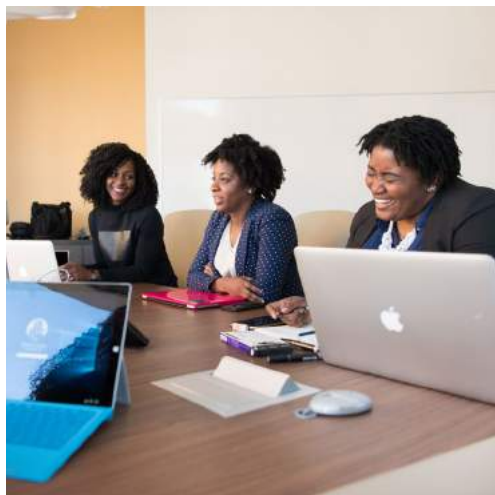
**4.7**

MILLION JOBS  
created by minority  
entrepreneurs



# Theory of Change

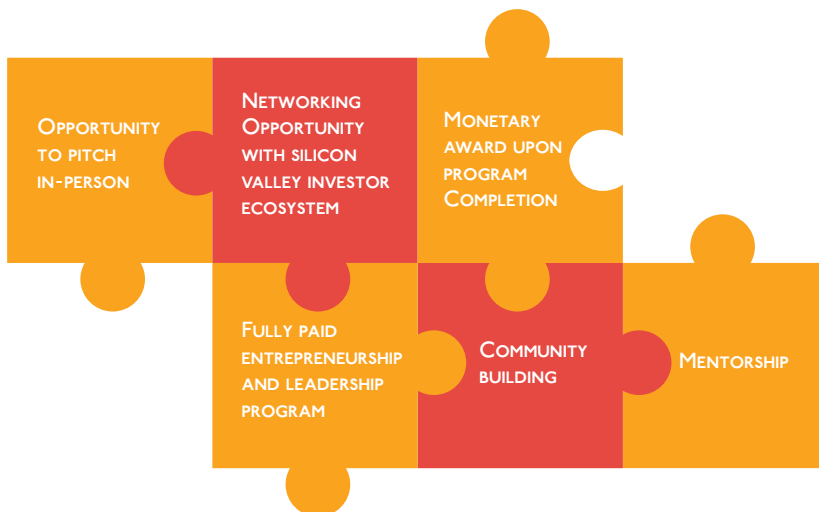
## The Origins of ABLE



African Diaspora Network first conceived of ABLE as an adaptation of the Builders of Africa's Future (BAF) program. In January 2020, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation observed the success of Builders of Africa's Future Awards and pitch presentations by grassroots African entrepreneurs at the fifth annual African Diaspora Investment Symposium. They shared interest in an ADN program that would support U.S.-based Black entrepreneurs through an enterprise accelerator similar to BAF. With seed funding from SVCF, African Diaspora Network sought partners from across Silicon Valley to help realize the program. Thanks to the support and insight of BILL, we secured full funding for ABLE, which ADN leveraged to garner additional support from the CA Black Freedom Fund, KLA Foundation, and the County of Santa Clara to launch the inaugural cohort in 2021.

## The ABLE Approach: Theory of Change

The Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE) program strategically addresses the pervasive opportunity gap facing Black entrepreneurs. Recognizing the critical need for ongoing technical support, mentorship, and improved access to capital, ABLE stands as a transformative initiative. Leveraging the Silicon Valley Executive Center's proven global model, renowned for channeling capital to sustainable enterprises, and bolstered by leadership support and enduring mentorship support from the Silicon Valley Executive Center and ADN's distinguished network of Black leaders, ABLE is changing the narrative. This comprehensive approach forms a robust system of human capital development, empowering diasporan individuals and offering a comprehensive strategy to enhance their investment readiness for external funding. The program equips entrepreneurs with the knowledge to attract the right types of capital and leverage innovative funding vehicles, propelling early and mid-stage enterprises toward success. Armed with these tools, the selected Black-owned businesses are poised to become catalysts, driving the creation of new markets and innovative solutions to varied market issues, revitalizing local U.S. economies, and contributing to community impact and fiscal growth. ABLE is not just a program; it's a transformative force ushering in positive change and empowerment.



# Meet The Entrepreneurs

## ABLE Cohort 3

Meet the 11 entrepreneurs of the third cohort of Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship. ABLE Cohort Three is composed of leaders of impact-oriented, for-profit organizations from across the United States.

Each of these business leaders stand out for their unique and sustainable solution to a community need; demonstrated traction of their enterprise, even through the pandemic; and a clear commitment, with goals to scale that align with the ABLE program offerings.



**Serge Amouzou**  
CEO & Founder, Datatrixs,  
Data-Tech, San Francisco, CA



**Samuel Baddoo**  
CEO, Fleri, Health-Tech,  
Columbus, OH



**Christopher Bennett**  
Founder/ Attorney, T-I-L(R)  
Technology-Innovation-Law,  
Legal- Tech, Washington, D.C.



**Akinsola Jegede**  
CEO, Vital Swap Technologies,  
Fin-Tech, Indianapolis, IN



**Tyrell Junius**  
Co-Founder & COO,  
Tiami Networks, Connectivity,  
Elk Grove, CA



**Rhode Malivert**  
CEO, K-12 Preparatory  
Academy, Education,  
Plantation, FL



**Bobola Odebiyi**  
Founder & CEO, CrossKudi,  
Fin-Tech, Wauwatosa, WI



**Sarah Odiavbara**  
Chief Technology Officer,  
Craftmerce, Inc., Retail/ Goods,  
Middletown, DE



**Omolola Omishore**  
CEO, TheraMotive, Health  
& Wellness, Brooklyn, NY



**Clement Owusu-Donkor**  
Founder & CEO, Aquantuo,  
Logistics, Smyrna, DE

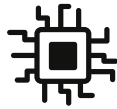


**Shingai Samudzi**  
Founder & CEO, Asobda,  
Renewable Energy  
San Raphael, CA

## Industries & Sectors



Connectivity



Data-Tech



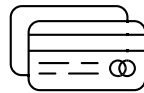
Education



Health-Tech



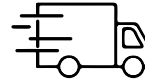
Health & Wellness



FinTech



Legal-Tech

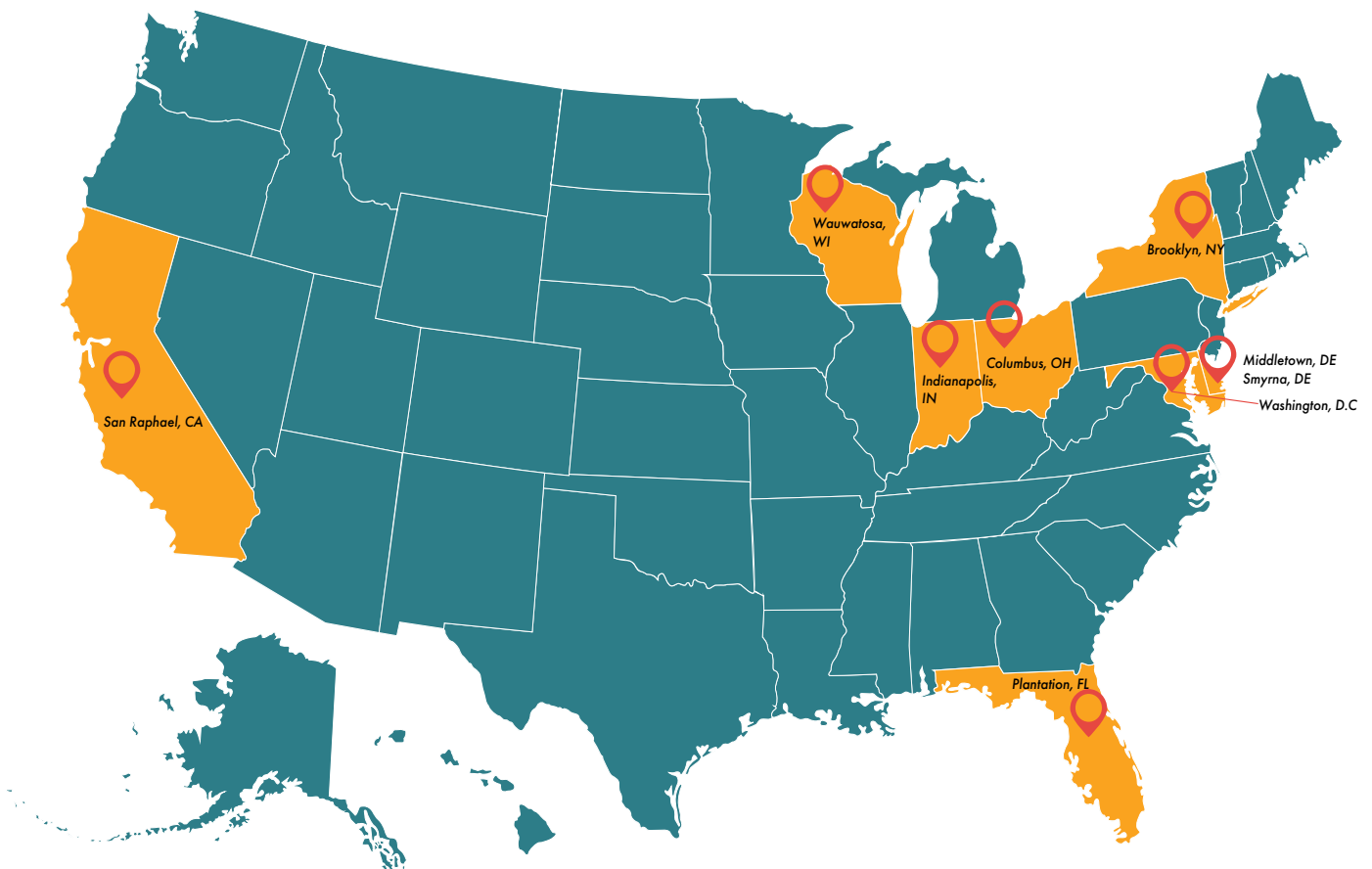


Logistics



Renewable Energy

## Hometowns Represented Nationwide





# Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship 2023

## Cohort 3

The 2023 Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship cohort is comprised of 11 entrepreneurs spanning eight states: California, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Ohio, New York, Washington, D.C., and Wisconsin.

All participating enterprises in the third cohort are 100% US-Based, Black owned, and represent 9 varied sectors including: Connectivity, Data-Tech, Education, Health-Tech, Health & Wellness, FinTech, Legal-Tech, Logistics, and Renewable Energy.



## Serge Amouzou, DATATRIXS



▶ **TITLE**  
CEO & Founder

▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.datatrixs.com](http://www.datatrixs.com)

▶ **LOCATION**  
San Francisco, CA

▶ **BIO**

Serge Amouzou is the CEO and Founder of Datatrixs, which empowers accounting firms with continuous client advisory services.

Serge previously founded a FinTech company aimed at helping service workers earn more net income and was named BBJ CEO of the Year Award recipient in 2017.

▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

"In fundraising, processes don't work for people like us. Connect authentically with anyone you come in contact with without any exceptions. As part of that authentic connection, enthusiastically share what you're working on and the passion behind it." –*Serge Amouzou, Datatrixs*

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**DATATRIXS**



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[/serge-amouzou-65b76841](https://www.linkedin.com/in/serge-amouzou-65b76841)



## Samuel Baddoo, FLERI



▶ **TITLE**  
CEO

▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.joinfleri.com](http://www.joinfleri.com)

▶ **LOCATION**  
Columbus, OH

### ▶ **BIO**

Sam Baddoo, founder and CEO of Fleri, grew up in Accra, Ghana, and left for Morocco at age 18 on a United Nations scholarship. His varied experiences with migration shaped his views on Pan-Africanism, immigration, and entrepreneurship, and ultimately inspired him to start Fleri, a membership-based platform for global migrants to support their loved ones back home, as an alternative to cash transfers.

Sam is a serial entrepreneur and an active reservist in the United States Army. He is a Harambean, a NASDAQ Milestone Maker, and a Techstars Toronto Alumni.

Sam's vision is to create a world where immigrants everywhere can thrive, and not just survive. Fleri is working towards that mission by building products that enable immigrants to support their loved ones globally without sacrificing their financial well-being.

### ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

"It's about the Vision + Journey + Destination. Enjoy each phase and share the lessons learned and the positives along the way" –*Christopher Bennett, T-I-L*



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[/fleri\\_global](https://twitter.com/fleri_global)



[/joinfleri](https://www.instagram.com/joinfleri)

## Christopher Bennett, T-I-L(R)



▶ **TITLE**  
Founder/Attorney

▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.t-i-l-group.com](http://www.t-i-l-group.com)

▶ **LOCATION**  
Washington, D.C.

### ▶ **BIO**

Christopher “Chris” Bennett, JD, MBA, CPM is the founder of T-I-L(R), a social impact law and legal technology startup, working to make intellectual property rights more accessible to the underrepresented.

His law and technology work includes startups, SMEs, and enterprise size organizations. Chris has graduate degrees from Georgetown (JD), Penn (MBA), a BA in education from Morehead State University / Johnson C. Smith University, and professional certifications in Blockchain, Data Science, Energy Innovation & Emerging Technologies, and Six-Sigma, and is a Certified Public Manager and Intellectual Property Law Attorney.

Chris lives in Washington DC with life partner Jan, enjoys family and friends time, community service activities, and running on trails.

### ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

“It’s about the Vision + Journey + Destination. Enjoy each phase and share the lessons learned and the positives along the way” –*Christopher Bennett, T-I-L*



[/chris-bennett-47861](https://www.linkedin.com/company/chris-bennett-47861)

# Akinsola Jegede, Vital Swap Technologies



▶ **TITLE**  
CEO & Founder

▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.Vitalswap.com](http://www.Vitalswap.com)

▶ **LOCATION**  
Indianapolis, IN

## ▶ **BIO**

Akinsola is the technical founder of VitalSwap, bringing over 7 years of experience in developing technical solutions for multinational US corporations such as Salesforce, AT&T, and StateFarm.

As an immigrant from Africa, Akinsola personally encountered the challenges of international payments, the very issue that VitalSwap is passionately committed to addressing. With expertise as a seasoned systems architect and entrepreneur, Akinsola's journey fuels his dedication to creating innovative solutions for global financial accessibility.

## ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

"Quitters never win. If you strongly believe in your idea and the impact of the change, don't quit. Be flexible with your approach but stay focused on the goal." –*Akinsola Jegede, Vital Swap*



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[/vitalswap](https://twitter.com/vitalswap)



[/akinsolajegede](https://www.linkedin.com/company/vitalswap)

## Tyrell Junius, Tiami Networks



- ▶ **TITLE**  
Co-Founder & COO
- ▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.tiaminetworks.com](http://www.tiaminetworks.com)
- ▶ **LOCATION**  
Elk Grove, CA

### ▶ **BIO**

Tyrell served as an Associate Director at the Atlantic Council's Africa Center, and subsequently ventured into the entrepreneurial realm, co-founding Tiami Networks, where he is the Chief Operating Officer (COO). Under his stewardship, Tiami Networks is playing a vital role in connecting remote and under-served areas with reliable connectivity, fostering an environment of digital inclusion.

Tyrell is synonymous with social impact and community upliftment and is a seasoned professional with a strong dedication to humanitarian efforts. Tyrell is a passionate advocate for volunteerism, farming, fashion, technology, and local economic development. He has cultivated a career that spans multiple continents and sectors, embodying the spirit of giving back and helping others.

### ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

I know our businesses are our babies, but finding a great Co-Founder/partner can help with delegation of tasks and fast tracking your business to win." –*Tyrell Junius, Tiami Networks*

# Rhode Malivert, K-12 Preparatory Academy



▶ **TITLE**  
CEO

▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.k12prepacademy.com](http://www.k12prepacademy.com)

▶ **LOCATION**  
Plantation, FL

## ▶ **BIO**

Hailing from Haiti, Rhode journeyed to the United States at the age of 12. Commencing her professional career as a Chemical Engineer, Rhode's aspiration was to catalyze positive transformations in people's lives. Following a span of 14 years in the corporate realm, her entrepreneurial spirit birthed the genesis of K-12 Preparatory Academy that focuses on the educational empowerment of learners.

K-12 Preparatory Academy has extended its reach to distressed corners of the globe, collaborating with organizations in Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Poland. Now, K-12 Preparatory Academy offers a multifaceted curriculum, programs spanning Career and Technical Education (CTE), Virtual Reality, Dual Enrollment, Honors/Advanced Placement (AP), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), tailored to its global student body.

Rhode's enduring commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and excellence remains a driving force propelling K-12's Preparatory Academy towards its mission of illuminating the pathways of education for all.

## ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

"No one knows your story better than you and it's up to you to get others excited about your vision."  
– Rhode Malivert, K-12 Preparatory Academy



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[/K12prepacademy](https://twitter.com/K12prepacademy)



[/rhodemalivert](https://www.linkedin.com/in/rhodemalivert)



## Bobola Odebiyi, CrossKudi



▶ **TITLE**  
Founder & CEO

▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.crosskudi.com](http://www.crosskudi.com)

▶ **LOCATION**  
Wauwatosa, WI

### ▶ **BIO**

Bobola Odebiyi, is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and the founder & CEO of CrossKudi. Bobola began his career as a taxi driver in Chicago before working his way up to becoming a CPA. Bobola has provided tax consulting services to hedge fund and private equity clients at Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) and co-led the PwC global Blockchain Community of Interest that trained colleagues on implementing emerging technologies to serve clients better.

As an immigrant himself, Bobola fully understands the challenges that the 47 million US immigrant population experiences financially, which is the target audience of CrossKudi.

### ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

"Raising funds is challenging! Get outside of your comfort zone and immediate circle, and start building connections with investors before you'll need them."

– *Bobola Odebiyi, CrossKudi*



[/crosskudi/](https://www.instagram.com/crosskudi/)



[/bobolaodebiyi/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bobolaodebiyi/)

## Sarah Odiavbara, Craftmerce, Inc.



▶ **TITLE**  
Chief Technology Officer

▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.craftmerce.com](http://www.craftmerce.com)

▶ **LOCATION**  
Middletown, DE

### ▶ **BIO**

Sarah Odiavbara is an experienced full-stack developer with experience in creating and building e-commerce web platforms. She is the CTO of Craftmerce, an online marketplace platform that connects African handmade brands with global buyers and international retail stores. She has worked and helped grow companies that have raised over \$1M in revenues.

She is dedicated to building world-class modern web applications and crafting high-performance web experiences for customers. She has a bachelor's in engineering from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and she was named one of the 1000 Black Voices 2022. In addition, she was selected as an Ondeck Accelerator Alum, as well as a Bees Soft landing program by Enrich in Africa, La French Tech Award.

### ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

"Persevere through challenges and setbacks. Entrepreneurship is a journey filled with highs and lows. The ability to adapt, learn from failures, and keep moving forward is what defines success. Stay focused on your vision, remain resilient, and use obstacles as opportunities for growth. Your resilience is your greatest strength." – *Sarah Odiavbara, Craftmerce*



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[/craftmerce](https://twitter.com/craftmerce)



[/odiavbara-sarah/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/odiavbara-sarah/)

# Omolola Omishore, TheraMotive



▶ **TITLE**  
CEO

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▶ **LOCATION**  
Brooklyn, NY

## ▶ **BIO**

Lola Omishore, founder of TheraMotive, is a first-generation Nigerian-American Doctor of Physical Therapy based in NYC. With over 10 years of experience, she is an accomplished physical therapist, published research author, Board Certified Orthopedic Specialist, and Certified Athletic Trainer.

She began her career treating elite athletes across the globe, providing 'healthcare on demand' and has worked with a diverse range of patients including Professional Athletes, Weekend Warriors, stroke survivors, infants, toddlers, and individuals from all walks of life. Now, she's bringing that same gold-medal-worthy care to everyone's corner, because access to top-notch healthcare isn't a privilege, it's a civil right.

## ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

"The real key to working smart and not hard is to build your professional network. Invest in relationships, you'll be paid in dividends." —*Dr. Lola Omishore, Theramotive*



[/theramotive/](https://www.instagram.com/theramotive/)



[/dr-lola-omishore](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dr-lola-omishore/)

## Clement Owusu-Donkor, Aquantuo



▶ **TITLE**  
Founder & CEO

▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.aquantuo.com](http://www.aquantuo.com)

▶ **LOCATION**  
Smyrna, DE

### ▶ **BIO**

Clement's extensive background in IT and telecommunications engineering has seen him work for decades in the telecommunications, payment processing, public utility and IT industries, providing leadership and support for critical backend infrastructure for several private and fortune 100 companies.

Having been associated with logistics from infancy, Clement is currently the founder and Chief Servant at Aquantuo, an ecommerce, shipping and third party logistics company where he partners with a dynamic team of 100 and counting across 9 countries and with strategic partnerships across the globe. He and the team at Aquantuo are on a mission to transform lives globally through efficient trade and logistics.

### ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

"If others can, why can't I?" – **Clement Owusu-Donkor, Aquantuo**



 [/clement-owusu-donkor/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/aquantuo/)

## Shingai Samudzi, Asoba



▶ **TITLE**  
Founder & CEO

▶ **WEBSITE**  
[www.asoba.co](http://www.asoba.co)

▶ **LOCATION**  
San Raphael, CA

### ▶ **BIO**

I am a first generation American by way of Zimbabwe, obsessed with infrastructure. I have been in numerous strategy and data science roles within the energy, healthcare and tech industries, from companies like Kaiser Permanent to Google.

As CEO and Co-Founder of Asoba, we are leveraging virtual power plant software to aggregate excess clean energy at the utility scale and provide on-demand electricity to retail buyers. Our commitment is to clean energy is the passion behind our building Africa's largest private clean energy marketplace.

### ▶ **Advice for Black entrepreneurs, by Black entrepreneurs**

"Entrepreneurship is hard as it is. Looking at the world thru a lens of racial grievance makes it 10x harder. Yes, being black can have disadvantages re: racial bias but it is 100% not why you may be struggling to raise money or close sales. I promise you, VCs aren't saying no because you are black, it's because the way you frame your story and business opportunity isn't lining up with the needs/goals of the investors relative to the hundreds of other pitches they get. Focus on what you can control, don't spend energy worrying about what you can't." –*Shingai Samudzi, Asoba*



[/shingai](#)



# ABLE Year 3 Activities & Outcomes

## ABLE Cohort 3 Recap

ABLE Cohort 3 took place from September 13, 2023-October 26, 2023. The program began with the welcome celebration on September 7th that kicked off the third cohort. The ABLE alumni community joined in to provide a warm community welcome and share their impact and ABLE journeys with the incoming cohort.

### Weekly Program Trainings Topics: September 2023 - October 2023

The cohort kicked off their five week executive education training with the Silicon Valley Executive Center at Santa Clara University on September 07th. Participants had a chance to get to know one another and set intentions for learning in the program before diving into their weekly trainings:

## Topics

September 07th September 13th September 20th September 27th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» ABLE Program Kick-Off</li><li>» Session 1: Business Model Canvas</li><li>» Session 2: Finance &amp; Funding</li><li>» Session 3: Leading Teams &amp; Internal Dynamics</li></ul>
October 4th October 5th October 11th October 25th October 26th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Session 4: Legal Considerations</li><li>» Special Session: Legal Considerations Office Hours</li><li>» Session 5: Presentation &amp; Networking</li><li>» ABLE 23 Pitch Day Rehearsal</li><li>» ABLE23 Pitch Day &amp; Program Graduation</li></ul>



I want to share my thanks and appreciation. You all did a great job following up with us.

- Aksinola Jegede, CEO, Vital Swap

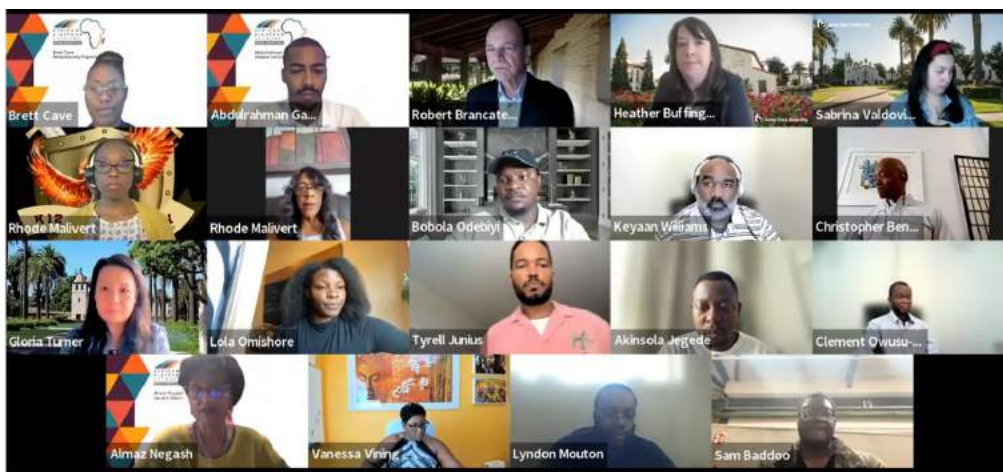
## Curriculum Highlights

Based on survey feedback from the eleven entrepreneurs, the training sessions supported the development of their pitch structure and business model and provided a space to think through investor conversations. The legal session was notably beneficial for the entrepreneurs.

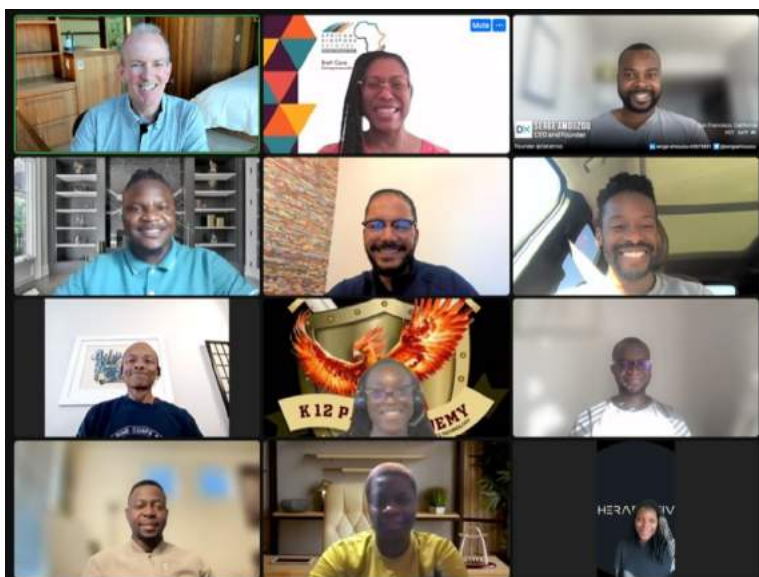
## Mentorship & Office Hours

Each ABE entrepreneur was paired with a mentor through a process that matched their stated areas of need with an area of expertise that one of our experts could provide. In addition, we identified connections within the ABE mentor pool of individuals who could provide additional support. These mentor teams provided support for the ABE entrepreneurs as they prepared for their October pitch session.

The Silicon Valley Executive Center also coordinated office hours with faculty members for the ABE founders. Each individual had the opportunity to book a 30-minute advising session with faculty members who served as facilitators of the program.



ABE 23 Cohort 3 Kickoff



BILL, GROUP MENTOR SESSION



I have been in a lot of programs. This program has been the most educational of all of them.

- Shingai Samudzi, CEO, Asoba

## Network-Building Forums

The ABLE network-building forums provide a focused co-learning session with seasoned industry experts. These sessions gather program participants, alumni, mentors, and ecosystem partners, with a focus on business connections and professional development, and will enable the ABLE participants to seek guidance on practical application of the topics.

ABLE Cohort 3 featured two network-building forums:



<p><b>ABLE - French Press PR Workshop: "The 3 Secrets Founders Need to Know to Start Getting Featured in Press."</b> Thursday, June 6, 2023</p> <p>Panelist/Presenter: Candice Smith Founder- CEO- PR &amp; Visibility Strategist</p>	<p>Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE), an enterprise accelerator by the African Diaspora Network designed to strengthen, energize, and support startups and small businesses led by Black entrepreneurs in the United States is hosting the first of a series of alumni engagement and professional enrichment workshops.</p> <p>ABLE's ecosystem partner French Press PR will cover topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The exact strategy French Press PR uses to find top media opportunities for clients</li> <li>• The 3 big myths founders and solopreneurs believe about PR</li> <li>• The mindset shift that will give you an advantage and set your business' PR strategy up for success</li> </ul>
<p><b>ABLE- Assessing Your Financial Health</b> Thursday, August 17 , 2023</p> <p>Panelist/ Presenter: Eric Smith CEO &amp; Co-Founder</p> <p>Brandon Mahoney Co-Founder &amp; President</p>	<p>Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE), an enterprise accelerator by the African Diaspora Network designed to strengthen, energize, and support startups and small businesses led by Black entrepreneurs in the United States is hosting the second in a series of alumni engagement and professional enrichment workshops.</p> <p>ABLE's ecosystem partner LaunchPoint Labs will cover topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Formula for Liquidity</li> <li>• Projecting Revenue and Expenses</li> <li>• Your Current Value Assessment</li> </ul>

In these intimate learning sessions, ABLE entrepreneurs had the opportunity to have a live Q&A with the presenters and followed up with speakers after the sessions.



## October 26 ABL Pitch Day and Graduation

On October 26th, African Diaspora Network and the Silicon Valley Executive Center held the third hybrid pitch day and program graduation for the third cohort of Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE) program. The day began with an impressive lineup of opening remarks and keynote speakers, including:

- » Almaz Negash, Founder Executive Director, The African Disapora Network (ADN)
- » Dennis Lanham, Sr. Assistant Dean of Executive Education and Executive Director of Silicon Valley Executive Center, Santa Clara University,
- » Dr. Julie Sullivan, President Santa Clara University
- » Raj Aji, ADN Board Member and General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer, BILL.com
- » René Lacerte, CEO and Founder of BILL
- » Lisha Bell, Co-Founder, BLXVC
- » Joyce Chung, President of Makahakama Foundation



The morning provided two rounds of pitches, with all eleven entrepreneurs taking the stage to present their ventures to our in-person and online audience. We proudly graduated eleven entrepreneurs as part of our 2023 class, with a financial award announced by Joyce Chung, President of Makahakama Foundation, to conclude the event.

As the third cohort experienced its inaugural hybrid pitch day, we were thrilled to witness the dynamism of the high-energy, in-person pitches, with attendees also connecting with the virtual audience. A heartfelt appreciation goes out to our mentors, facilitators, ecosystem partners, alumni, and funders for graciously joining us to champion and uplift the entrepreneurs. Your support has been instrumental in shaping the success of the third ABLE cohort.



## ABLE Year 3 Pitch Day and Graduation



Shingai Samudzi



Sarah Odiavbara



Christopher Bennett



Clement Owusu-Donkor



Akinsola Jegede



Omolola Omishore



Serge Amouzou



Bobola Odebiyi



Rhode Malivert



Tyrell Junius



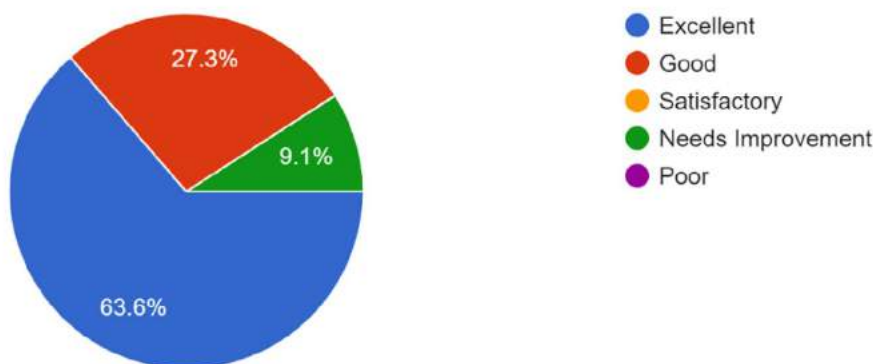
Samuel Baddoo



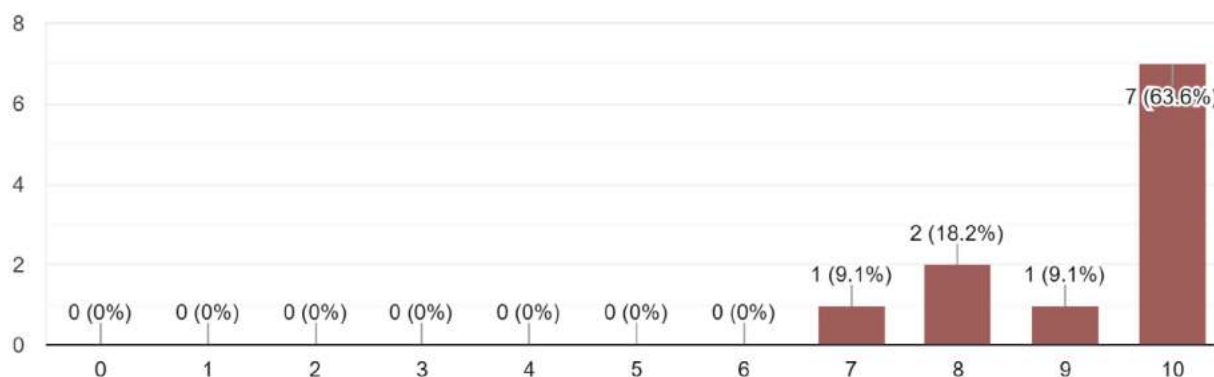
# Overview of the ABLE Year 3 Experience

The eleven entrepreneurs all completed their program surveys. Based on their surveys, 10/11 highly recommend the program and found their experience to be excellent and good.

Please rate your overall experience during the program on a scale of 1-5.



How likely are you to recommend this program to someone else?



## Program Highlights

To summarize our ABLE Impact Highlights (see page #), the entrepreneurs benefited most from:

- » Pitch Preparation and Practice
- » Broadening Networks and Making Connections
- » Support with Scaling

“Being part of this Cohort has been an extraordinary blessing. As an entrepreneur of color, it’s common to experience moments of isolation on our journey, but ABLE has not only provided me with inspiration but also equipped me with essential tools and an empowering community, propelling my journey forward.”

– Rhode Malivert; CEO, K12 Preparatory Academy and ABLE 2023 cohort member.

## Areas of Opportunity

Cohort members shared their ideas for improving future iterations of the program, including: Pitch Preparation and Practice

- » Earlier introductions to mentors before or during the virtual kick-off
- » Enhancing curriculum to include design-thinking and go-to-market strategy
- » Having investors teach the sessions
- » Shortening the individual training days

## Program Impact

### In Their Own Words

“

I believe that the connections shared with fellow cohort members was unparalleled. The teachers we had in our sessions were very knowledgeable and opened to helping us. I have formed acting friendships and potential partnership collaboration through this program. ABLE Cohort 23 for LIFE!

*Rhode Malivert, CEO, K-12 Preparatory*

“

The weekly training sessions were impactful. Thank you ABLE for covering all my expenses and providing access to resources that has proven difficult for black founders to access

*Akinsola Jegede, CEO, Vital Swap*

“

ABLE, and the Community, are making a positive difference. Partner to capture data that captures the impact and share it with stakeholders.

*Christopher Bennett, Founder & Attorney,  
T-I-L,(R) Technology Innovation Law*

“

My greatest takeaway from the program was connecting with the Cohort members and our will to assist each other with our business goals.

*Tyrell Junius, COO, Tiami Networks*

“

The ABLE Program provided some great mentor relationships.

*Samuel Baddoo, CEO, Fleri*

“

The pitch preparation aided in my prep for a Verizon pitch competition held last week which I won, praise God.

*Omolola Omishore, CEO, Theramotive*

“

I actually learned some new things during the ABLE program, like accessing and using management capabilities, among others, as a competitive advantage. The program was well structured.

**Serge Amouzou, CEO & Founder, Datatrixs**

“

A lot of good foundations were laid. It is incumbent on me to execute to see the results I desire in scaling the business and having more impact.

**Clement Owusu-Donkor, Founder & CEO, Aquantuo**

“

The biggest takeaways (and improvements) were around storytelling.

**Shingai Samudzi, CEO, Asoba**

“

The ABLE program has been an absolute game-changer for me and Craftmerce. The support, resources, and mentorship provided through this program have propelled my business to new heights. One of the greatest takeaways was access to a network of experienced mentors and fellow entrepreneurs who shared their insights and experiences, guiding me through challenges and helping me capitalize on opportunities.

The program's tailored workshops and training sessions were incredibly valuable, equipping me with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship. Learning from industry experts and receiving personalized guidance has been instrumental in refining my business strategy and approach.

The sense of community fostered by the ABLE program was phenomenal. Connecting with like-minded individuals who shared similar journeys created a supportive ecosystem where we could learn from each other's successes and failures.

Overall, the ABLE program has not only accelerated Craftmerce but has also instilled in me a sense of confidence and determination to push boundaries and achieve greater heights. I'm immensely grateful for the opportunities and guidance provided by this program.

**Sarah Odiavbara, Chief Technology Officer, Craftmerce**

# ABLE Cohort 4 and Ways to Engage

African Diaspora Network is committed to preparing the next generation of Black entrepreneurs. ABLE Cohort 4 will take place from September to October 2024, leading up to a graduation and pitch day on the Santa Clara University Campus in October 2024.

The application portal will open in late spring of 2024, with the evaluation and selection process slated to take place in the summer. ABLE cohort 4 will consist of 15-20 entrepreneurs leading impact-oriented, for-profit organizations.

## Get involved!

Make a difference for our cohort of changemakers! Join the ABLE ecosystem and get involved in one of the following ways. Email [brett@africandiasporanetwork.org](mailto:brett@africandiasporanetwork.org) for more information.



### Be a mentor

Advise the entrepreneurs as a part of a mentor pair or mentor pool. We are currently accepting new mentors for cohort 4.



### Be a reviewer

Participate in the due diligence and evaluation process.



### Be a speaker

Speak at one of our network-building events.



### Be an ecosystem partner

Amplify the application opportunity to your networks and help us identify potential candidates.



### Be a funder

Provide support for the accelerator programs and the entrepreneurs. Make a gift through our [Support Us](#) page or meet with our program team to discuss giving opportunities. Thank you for your willingness to support us.



### Provide pro bono services

Your organization can provide pro bono services in areas ranging from legal to accounting to marketing and design services to the cohort. We welcome pro bono services to our current cohort and/or our alumni.

# Thank You!

A special thank you from the African Diaspora Network for all of the organizations, individuals, and supporters who have made this program possible.

## Funders



MAKAHAKAMA  
FOUNDATION



KLA+  
FOUNDATION

**BlackRock**



**Andrew Beebe**

## Academic Partner



SILICON VALLEY EXECUTIVE CENTER  
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

## ABLE Mentors

Thank you to the mentors who have dedicated their time, talent, and expertise to supporting the entrepreneurs throughout their ABLE journey!

## ABLE Ecosystem Partners

African Visionary Fund	Harambeans	Stanford Seed
Ashinaga USA	HSeven	SVCF
Ashoka/Ashoka Africa	Ignite Venture Studio	Technopark
ATDC Georgia Tech	ImpactLab Africa	TechTown Detroit
AWE	IOM (Kenya)	Texas Medical Center Innovation
Bantaba	Jaza Rift Ventures	The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)
Bolster	KBFUS	The Baobab Network
BILL.com	Knowledge Impact Network	The Idyeas Group
Carnegie Mellon University Africa	Launch Point Labs	The Lucas-Kennedy Foundation
Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Goizueta Business School, Emory University	Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University	The Startup School
Collaborate for Africa	Lucas-Kennedy Foundation & CREATE!	The WISE Fund
Danone Communities	Management Leadership of Tomorrow	Toigo Foundation
Draper Venture Network	Megathos Law Practice	UC Berkeley, Center for African Studies
East Bay Community Foundation (Ascend: BLO)	Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship	University of California, Berkeley;
Equalize Health	Resolution Project	MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program
Euromed University	Sakuti Cultural Networking	Unreasonable Group
Founders Factory Africa	Segal Family Foundation	U.S. State Department
French Press PR	Siemens-Stiftung	Valence
George Washington University, Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Silicon Valley Black Chamber of Commerce	VC4A
Ghana Investment Promotion Center	Silicon Valley Community Foundation	Villgro Africa
	Skoll Foundation	Vision Forward
	Social Enterprise Ghana	
	Social Innovation Academy	



# Preparing the Next Generation of Black Entrepreneurs



## Support Us

Be an organizational sponsor and support the African Diaspora Network to bring together diverse people from around the world to collaborate and work together.

[Support ADN here](#)

## Get involved

Join the ABE ecosystem as a nominator or ecosystem partner.  
Participate in our evaluation process as a volunteer reviewer.  
Be a mentor for the next ABE cohort.  
Connect our ABE alumni and participants with resources.

For more information, contact:

**Brett L. Cave**  
Entrepreneurship Programs Manager  
[Brett@AfricanDiasporaNetwork.org](mailto:Brett@AfricanDiasporaNetwork.org)

## Stay Connected

Subscribe to the African Diaspora Network  
[newsletter here.](#)



Subscribe to our [Youtube Channel](#)



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