



**Bridges to Career Opportunities
Financial Opportunity Center
National Meeting
October 3 – 5, 2017
St. Paul, MN**

PLENARY SPEAKER BIOS

**Day 1 Opening Plenary
Pathways to Opportunity: Skills, Careers and Stability**

Featured Speaker



MAURICE JONES

With deep experience in both the public and private sectors, Maurice Jones took the helm as LISC's fourth president & CEO in September 2016. Immediately prior to joining LISC, he served as the secretary of commerce for the Commonwealth of Virginia, where he managed 13 state agencies focused on the economic needs in his native state. He previously served as deputy secretary for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) overseeing operations for the agency and its 8,900 staff members. Prior to that he was commissioner of Virginia's Department of Social Services and deputy chief of staff to former Virginia Gov. Mark Warner.

Trained as an attorney, Maurice worked during the Clinton Administration on legal, policy and program issues at the Treasury Department, where he also helped manage a then-new initiative called the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) fund—a federal program that has grown to be a critical supporter of nonprofits that leverage its capital to bolster their communities. In the private sector, Maurice was the general manager of The Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk and went on to become president and publisher of its parent company. He also worked for a Richmond law firm and a private philanthropy investing in community-based efforts to benefit children in Washington, D.C.

Raised by his grandparents in a rural southern Virginia community where his family had a tobacco and corn farm, Jones was awarded a full merit scholarship to Hampden-Sydney College, a small liberal arts school. In 1986, he graduated Phi Beta Kappa and was selected as a Rhodes Scholar. At Oxford University, he earned a master's degree in international relations. In 1992, he graduated from the University of Virginia Law School.

Panelists



ROBIN BOGGS

Robin Boggs is the US Corporate Citizenship Lead for Accenture, where she is responsible for outcomes from Skills to Succeed and environmental stewardship initiatives. She leads a pro bono and cash giving portfolio and all employee engagement programs for approximately 50,000 US employees in 32 locations. In addition to her Accenture responsibilities, Robin also serves as Secretary of the board of the Association of Corporate Contributions Professionals and is a member of the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Education,

Employment and Training Committee.

Prior to her Corporate Citizenship role, Robin spent 13 years leading human performance and customer relationship management projects for Accenture clients in telecommunications and public service. She's been active many local community initiatives during her Accenture career and spent a year on pro bono projects for the Homeless Prenatal Program in San Francisco and Points of Light in Atlanta. Before joining Accenture, she spent five years in nonprofit sales, business development and program execution. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, History and Drama from Queens University of Charlotte and a Master's degree in Shakespeare Studies from the University of Birmingham (England), which she earned during a year as a Rotary Foundation Scholar. Outside of work, she serves as a board member of Heartbound Ministries and a volunteer with Happy Tails Pet Therapy in her hometown of Atlanta, Georgia.



YESENIA CERVANTES

Yesenia Cervantes is the Dean of Student Services and Community Affairs at Instituto Del Progreso Latino (Instituto). In her role as Dean, she oversees the admissions, recruitment and support services for Instituto College, launching in spring 2018. Prior to being named Dean Ms. Cervantes was the Director of Instituto's Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) and several other workforce development programs and initiative for 10 years. During her tenure as a leader in Instituto's integration of services, Instituto's Financial Opportunity Center was recognized as a local and national model for best practices for program integration, leveraging multiple funding streams for sustainability and establishing financial services as an essential and complementary service for

workforce development programs. Instituto is a leader in the integration of Career Pathways and Supportive Services and is nationally recognized as an innovative leader for best program and service integration practices.

Ms. Cervantes brings extensive experience in workforce development to her role as Dean, from developing and implementing programs to negotiating and managing public and private contracts. Ms. Cervantes also consults in the development of new FOCs in Chicago and nationally. She holds a Leadership Certificate from the University of Chicago, an MBA from National Louis University and a BA in psychology from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Ms. Cervantes enjoys spending time with her family and friends, and traveling.

Day 1 Lunch Plenary

Access to Quality Jobs: Systems Change & Policy Alignment

Keynote Speaker



RAVI NORMAN

Ravi Norman serves as CEO of THOR Companies, providing strategic leadership to the THOR family of affiliates/subsidiaries: THOR Development, THOR Design Plus, THOR Construction, THOR Consulting and THOR Energy w/JIT. He joined THOR in 2005 as CFO, overseeing the firm's financial strategies and operations. During his tenure as CFO he helped steer the company through the 2008-09 economic downturn that brought the U.S. building industry to a near-standstill.

Promoted to THOR CEO in 2009, Ravi directed the company along a strategic growth process that led to the 2017 formation of THOR Companies, a turnkey real estate development company with an expanded palette of integrated service offerings. He describes his leadership style as an optimal mix of macro business strategy, management and organizational theory and operational execution, formed

through more than 18 years of corporate executive-level experience in areas such as strategic management, organizational development and commercial finance.

Under Ravi's leadership, THOR Companies has positioned itself to serve as a strategic real estate and construction partner for clients seeking innovative and sustainable solutions in the built environment. THOR optimizes initial cost capital expenditures, ongoing operating expenses, and human satisfaction and wellbeing.

Ravi emphasizes that THOR, as one of the nation's largest black-owned private companies, brings a unique understanding of emerging communities, diversity and social inclusion as an additional value-add to their customers.

Ravi's formal education includes economics & finance degrees from the University of Minnesota. He has worked previously in executive positions for Norwest Bank, Wells Fargo & Co., and Highland Banks in the Twin Cities. He has received many awards and accolades, including being named as one of Minnesota's Most Admired CEOs of 2016 by the Minneapolis-St. Paul Business Journal. He also serves on numerous local and regional boards.

Moderator



JEREMIE GREER

Jeremie Greer is Vice President of Policy & Research at Prosperity Now. In this role, Jeremie oversees Prosperity Now's Federal Policy, Applied Research and Racial Wealth Divide teams, which are responsible for developing and executing the organization's policy and research agendas and advocacy strategies.

Previously, Jeremie served as Prosperity Now's Director of Government Affairs. Prior to joining Prosperity Now, he was a Senior Policy Officer at the Local Initiatives Support

Corporation where he led LISC policy advocacy on an array of federal issues including public housing, workforce development, asset building, green development, community service, smart growth, transportation and community safety. Jeremie also spent time at the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), where he provided non-partisan and fact-based federal policy analysis to the United States Congress in the areas of housing, community development, workforce, education, human services and environmental protection. He began his career at the community level working in the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods in the District of Columbia where he provided capacity building and technical support to small community-based organizations to help enhance their ability to serve low- and moderate-income D.C. residents. Jeremie has a Bachelor's of Social Work from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN, and a Master's of Public Policy from George Mason University in Fairfax, VA.

Panelists



NAVJEET SINGH

Navjeet Singh is the Senior Vice President and Chief Learning Officer for the National Fund for Workforce Solutions and is responsible for managing the organization's finances and financial reporting, leading its evaluation and learning activities, and assisting the President and CEO in all other activities.

Mr. Singh has more than 25 years of experience in workforce and economic development as well as the technology sector. Most recently he served as Vice President at Commonwealth Corporation where he led its Applied Research and Evaluation team, which researches trends in education and workforce and measures the success of related programs. He also worked on projects such as evaluation of sector partnerships, analysis of labor supply and demand, and studies of the health care and manufacturing workforce. Early in his career Mr. Singh also served on the staff of the Southeastern Massachusetts Partnership, an innovative economic development partnership of a university and five cities. Mr. Singh worked for Lucent Technologies/Bell Laboratories on Process Management and Product Operations, and for International Strategy Services, Inc.

He holds a Bachelor's in mechanical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur, an MBA from the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, and a Master's from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Navjeet serves on the Board of Directors of English for New Bostonians, and the Board of Directors of the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF), which is the oldest Sikh-American civil, and educational rights organization.



RASHIDA THOMAS

As Director of Workforce Development and Education, Rashida Thomas is responsible for the education and job training programs that provide sustainable career pathways in the areas of advanced manufacturing, engineering, and information technology. With a passion for positive social impact, Thomas is committed to providing equitable opportunities for the constituents served.

Thomas joined the Focus: HOPE leadership team in 2012 to implement a quality program and to manage special projects. She assumed her new role in mid-2013 and had worked previously at Focus: HOPE as manager of Fast Track, the highly regarded program to help adult students upgrade their math and reading skills.

A native Detroit, Thomas managed the math and reading enrichment program 2009–2011. She left Focus: HOPE to become the People Engagement Manager for Bright Automotive in Rochester Hills where she was responsible for defining and building a collaborative and innovative organization committed to the company's cultural and strategic priorities. Thomas has an extensive technical and leadership background after working 11 years for Chrysler LLC in engineering, product strategy, technical planning, and external affairs and public policy. Over the last 20 years, she has gained professional experience in a wide range of fields, across automotive engineering, executive management, organizational development and workforce training positions.

Thomas serves as Board Secretary for Grand River Academy National Charter School and is an alum of Detroit Regional Chamber Leadership Detroit Class XXXV. She holds a Master of Business Administration from Wayne State University, Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Oakland University, a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Michigan State University and a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt from Lawrence Technological University Professional Development Center.

Day 2 Opening Plenary

Local Spotlight: How to Coordinate Systems to Improve Quality Job Access for All

Moderator



ANDRIANA ABARIOTES

Andriana Abariotes, Executive Director, leads one of LISC's most creative and robust local offices, focused on supporting more collaborative approaches across neighborhoods and sectors including health, education and arts/culture; growing diverse leadership; and strengthening regional community economic development capacity. TC LISC annually invests \$8-10 million in local community-based economic development partners and strategies, which leverages nearly \$150 million in local redevelopment each year. To date, LISC has invested over \$621 million in grants, loans and equity in the Twin Cities region, helping create over 14,000 units of affordable housing and 2.1 million square feet of commercial and community facilities, leveraging another \$2.3 billion of investment in Twin City neighborhoods.

Ms. Abariotes serves as an advisor on several boards and task forces seeking to integrate strategies locally including the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood Advisory Board, the Community Resource Board for the Backyard Initiative, and the boards of directors for the Family Housing Fund and Twin Cities Community Land Bank. With over 25 years of experience, she draws from previous work with a range of organizations serving geographic, regional and cultural communities. She holds a B.A. from Macalester College and Masters Degree in Public Affairs from the University of Minnesota. In 2014, she was selected as a Bush Foundation Fellow. She lives in St. Paul with her husband and son.

Panelists



DR. SYLVIA BARTLEY

Dr. Sylvia Bartley is a lifelong seeker of spiritual enlightenment and inner peace. She strives to hold these values of self-awareness, empathy, and perseverance in all aspects of her life, both as Global Director at Medtronic and in her community-service work. Sylvia is known for connecting people and making things happen: as a scientific researcher at a leading medical school in London, she gained her PhD in Neurophysiology. After 13 years in academia, Sylvia transitioned to the medical device industry beginning in sales and progressing to global marketing. During the last fifteen years with Medtronic Sylvia has convened cross-functional teams across the globe to develop, improve, and disseminate neurosurgical techniques and best practices, primarily for Deep Brain Stimulation therapy. Developing and exceeding strategic goals is a hallmark of her work at every position she has held; the training models she developed have proven beneficial for businesses, patients, and physicians alike. Sylvia is now a Director in Philanthropy, a position which empowers her to leverage

her skills to advance an environment of compassion and humanity at work.

Since moving to Minneapolis in 2010, Sylvia has devoted much of her free time to improving the health, education and economic status of underserved communities. She has assumed board leadership roles for six prominent non-profit organizations, including the African American Leadership Forum, The Harvest Network of Schools, and The Black Women's Health Imperative. She is a recipient of a number of awards for her extraordinary achievement in business, her potential to lead change and strengthen the community. The award includes the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal's* 2017 Women in Business Award and 2013 Diversity in Business Award. 2014 Bush Foundation Fellowship and PM360 2014 Trailblazer Initiative Award.



DR. RASSOUL DASTMOZD

Dastmozd is the president/CEO of Saint Paul College in Saint Paul, Minn., one of 31 independently accredited institutions in Minnesota's colleges and universities system and also the most diverse and fastest-growing comprehensive college in the state. Since arriving in 2011, Dastmozd has led Saint Paul College, which has a total enrollment of 12,000 students, to national recognition as the No. 1 community college in the U.S. as ranked by Washington Monthly magazine. He was honored with the 2016 H.E.R.B.I.E. Award by the Saint Paul Chamber of Commerce for giving back to the community and for fostering strategic partnerships with local public, private and nonprofit organizations. The College also was named an Outstanding Business Success by the Chamber. Additionally, Dastmozd received the 2016 Shirley B. Gordon Award of Distinction by Phi Theta Kappa and the 2016 Minnesota Business Magazine (Real) Power of 50 award. Dastmozd has experience in strategic planning, accreditation and accountability initiatives,

recently completing and operationalizing a strategic plan and vision for Saint Paul College. He has guided the college to meeting and exceeding statewide completion benchmarks in the areas of student success, diversity, number of certificates/degrees awarded, efficient use of resources, stewardship of facilities and fiscal management, and development of new resources.

He has served on several regional and national boards including the American Association of Community Colleges' (AACC) Diversity Commission, AACC Master Mentor for MentorLink, NSF National Visiting Team, CyberWatch West and Minnesota Philanthropy, to name a few. Before joining Saint Paul College, Dastmozd was Clark College's vice president of instruction and workforce education for five years. Prior to Clark College, he was the dean of the Applied Technologies Division for Eastern Iowa Community College District, Scott Community College, from 1999 to 2006. Dastmozd has a bachelor's degree in Engineering Technology from Southwest State University in Minnesota, a master's degree in Educational Administration from Drake University in Iowa, and a doctorate in Education & Human Resources from Colorado State University.



BRYAN LINDSEY

Executive director of MSPWin, a collaborative of local and national foundations that are ensuring that the Twin Cities region develops the skilled and diverse workforce needed for continued economic competitiveness. Bryan leads MSPWin's efforts to eliminate racial employment disparities and create career pathways for low-skill, low-income adults to access family-sustaining jobs. He enjoys empowering communities to tackle difficult social problems with a vision, strategy and tangible results.

Previously Bryan was the executive director of the Governor's Workforce Development Council. Prior to that he was a policy analyst, employment counselor and research consultant. He has studied race, apartheid and nation-building in southern Africa, and the economics of fair trade coffee in Guatemala. He has a bachelor's degree in social justice from St. Olaf College and a master's of public policy with a concentration in community and economic development from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. He is an alumnus of the James P. Shannon Leadership Institute.



JEREMY HANSON WILLIS

Jeremy Hanson Willis was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Development for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) on June 2, 2014. As Deputy Commissioner, Jeremy is responsible for the strategic coordination of the department's varied workforce development efforts and aligning training and work readiness resources with the needs of Minnesota business. DEED's workforce programs include efforts to prepare youth and adults for careers with market demand, reduce employment disparities, provide economic support to those who are disabled and unemployed, and help employers build, recruit, and retain skilled workers.

Prior to joining DEED, Jeremy spent nine years in various roles with the City of Minneapolis. Most recently, Jeremy was Executive Director of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development, which manages the City's business development, workforce development, housing, land use planning, and building code inspections. Previously, Jeremy was Chief of Staff to Mayor R.T. Rybak, where he led the Mayor's Office staff and collaborated with City leadership to implement Mayor Rybak's agenda to improve the City of Minneapolis, with a focus on economic growth and workforce development. Prior to that role, he was Mayor Rybak's Communications Director and Press Secretary, where he was responsible for coordinating media relations, speech writing, social media, and overall communications strategy.

Before entering city government, Jeremy was a communications consultant at Tunheim Partners where he supported public advocacy campaigns for business and nonprofit clients involving communications strategy, media relations, coalition building and grassroots advocacy. Previously, Jeremy spent nearly ten years in nonprofit issue and legislative advocacy, including advancing the statewide public policy agendas of the Minnesota Smoke-Free Coalition and the Minnesota AIDS Project.

Jeremy grew up on a farm in rural Ada, MN, is a graduate of Macalester College (Saint Paul, MN) and has lived in Minneapolis since 1998. He currently resides in Uptown Minneapolis with his husband Samuel.

Day 2 Lunch Plenary

Field-Building: Research and Studies in Financial Stability and Workforce Development

Featured Speaker



MARTY MILES

Martha Miles (Marty) is a consultant with a focus on assisting community-based providers of workforce development services to accomplish better results. She supports the activities of the *Workforce Benchmarking Network*, led nationally by Corporation for a Skilled Workforce with local partners in New York, Chicago, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Dallas-Ft. Worth. In each of these cities, she uses workshops, peer learning groups and technical assistance to help providers strengthen their use of data to improve performance. The Benchmarking network's national data survey of workforce provider services and outcomes also offers useful information to the larger field about performance levels of programs with a variety of characteristics.

Marty's 30+ years of experience in workforce development began as a practitioner with the nonprofit Training, Inc. organization in Indianapolis, where she served as a trainer, job developer and executive director. She then led the Training, Inc. National Association for 10 years and assisted affiliates with developing a national data collection system. Marty was a Senior Program Director with Public/Private Ventures until P/PV's closing in 2012, where in addition to the Workforce Benchmarking project she also implemented capacity-building activities to strengthen providers' skills for developing sector-focused employer partnerships. She currently works as a consultant for the Aspen Institute to design and facilitate local workforce leadership academies to strengthen providers' collaboration and effective practice. Marty has a B.A. in sociology from Case Western Reserve University and an M.S. in adult education from Indiana University.

Panelists



JENNIFER McCLAIN

Jennifer D. McClain is the Director of Financial Opportunities at LISC Chicago, a national nonprofit that works to connect neighborhoods to the resources they need to become stronger and healthier. Jennifer directs and manages the organization's network of 12 Financial Opportunity Centers which are neighborhood based centers offering integrated services of career development and placement, financial coaching, digital skills training, credit building and income supports access. She has been with LISC since 2007 working on the network management and implementation in Chicago and

nationally.

Previously, Jennifer spent eight years at the Abraham Lincoln Centre on Chicago's South Side where she served in many capacities ranging from Intake Specialist to Data Manager to Operations Analyst. Her job duties included managing the client intake process to coordinating the activities of program relocations. Jennifer is a board member of Demoiselle 2 Femme (D2F) and a participant in the Allstate Foundation Greater Good Nonprofit Leaders Program. Jennifer holds Masters in Business Administration and Public Administration (with a Nonprofit Management emphasis) from the Keller Graduate School of Management and a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from Dillard University.



SAM SHERMAN

Samantha Sherman, MSW, is the Director of Educational Development at Wesley Community Center. Samantha has 20 years of experience in the non-profit sector developing and implementing educational programs across the age spectrum. Samantha has been involved in Wesley Community Center's Financial Opportunity Center work for 5 years. Samantha holds a Bachelor's Degree from Oberlin College and a Master's in Social Work from the University of Minnesota.



CHRIS WALKER

Chris Walker is Director of Research and Assessment for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. He is responsible for assembling, conducting, sponsoring, and disseminating research on community development's contributions to the well-being of individuals, families and communities. He also supports the research activities of the 30 LISC local programs throughout the United States.

Currently, he is working on studies of LISC public safety, asset-building, and creative placemaking programs, as well as analyses of patterns of low-income neighborhood change. In recent years, he has published analyses of the effects of LISC investments in low-income neighborhoods, factors that predict gentrification, and the effects of commercial revitalization programs on neighborhood business districts.

Prior to joining LISC in late 2005, Mr. Walker directed a community and economic development research program at the Urban Institute in Washington, DC, where he led national studies of federal- and foundation-funded affordable housing, community lending, arts and culture, and other community development issues.