



2025



DC SMALL BUSINESS SUMMIT AND EXPO

DC Chamber of Commerce
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WALTER E. WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER
TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2025



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2025 Small Business Summit & Expo

Resiliency During Uncertain Times

Thank you for joining the 2025 Small Business Summit & Expo.

The theme of this year's summit, Resiliency During Uncertain Times, is designed to help strengthen your foundation and continue to grow. In today's dynamic landscape, resilience is the key to long-term success.

Today, you'll get to hear from experts in a variety of workshops on the topics that matter most to small businesses, meet with local vendors and makers, connect with like-minded businesses, and gain the tools you need to grow your business.

With the insights you glean at the Summit, we hope you feel empowered to make informed decisions, pivot with purpose, and lead your teams with confidence.

We wish you a productive and rewarding day.



AGENDA

REGISTRATION OPENS & CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

7:30AM | Concourse

MORNING SESSION: WELCOME REMARKS AND KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

8:00AM – 9:30AM | 145 AB

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

Earle “Chico” Horton III, Esq., Founding Partner, Tiber Hudson LLC, and DC Chamber of Commerce Board Chairman

GREETINGS

Chairman Phil Mendelson, DC Council

Dr. Steven G Johnson, Executive Vice President, Events DC

Karima Woods, Commissioner, DC Dept. of Small & Local Business Development (DSLBD)

Mila Kofman, Executive Director, DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

Ronnette Meyers, President and CEO, JLAN Solutions, LLC

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Sharon Pinder, President and CEO, Capital Region Minority Supplier Development Council (CRMSDC)

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

Earle “Chico” Horton III, Esq., Founding Partner, Tiber Hudson LLC, and DC Chamber of Commerce Board Chair

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Tom Sullivan, Vice President, Small Business Policy, US Chamber of Commerce

CLOSING

Chinyere Hubbard, President and CEO, DC Chamber of Commerce

MAKERS MARKET & NETWORKING

9:00AM – 3:30PM | 146 AB

WORKSHOPS

10:00AM – 11:00AM

MAKERS MARKET & NETWORKING; COFFEE BREAK

11:00AM – 11:20AM | 146AB

WORKSHOPS

Workshop A: AI for Small Businesses | 144 C Harnessing Artificial Intelligence to Boost Efficiency and Growth

Explore practical applications of artificial intelligence tailored specifically for small businesses. This session covers affordable AI tools, automation strategies, and insights into how AI can streamline operations, enhance customer engagement, and drive smarter decision-making.

Moderator: Joe Paul, OptimaNova AI

Panelists:

- Alex Swartzel, Managing Director, Insights, Jobs for the Future (JFF) Labs
- Yohannes Tafesse, Chief Executive Officer & Founder, Gratitude Systems Technology
- Wole Moses, Chief AI Officer Federal Civilian, Microsoft
- Patrick James, Engineering Executive, Google

Workshop B: Procurement for Small Business | 144 B Harnessing Artificial Intelligence to Boost Efficiency and Growth

Learn effective approaches for navigating the procurement landscape, from identifying and bidding on opportunities to successfully managing contracts. Gain tips on forming strategic partnerships, positioning your business for government and corporate contracts, and leveraging certifications to enhance your competitive edge.

Moderator: Melissa Resil, Business Certification Manager, DC Department of Small & Local Business Development (DSLBD)

Panelists:

- Larry Webb, District Director, U.S. Small Business Administration
- Venessa Noel, DC Department of Small & Local Business Development (DSLBD)
- Phillip Berkaw, Senior Director, DC Community Anchor Partnership, The Coalition (formerly CNHED)
- Courtney Lattimore, Chief Learning Officer, DC Office of Contracting and Procurement

Workshop C: Marketing Mastery | 144 A Building Your Brand and Attracting Customers in Uncertain Times

This interactive workshop provides proven marketing strategies to help small businesses maintain visibility, attract new customers, and strengthen brand loyalty. Discover techniques for cost-effective digital marketing, content creation, social media engagement, and creative ways to connect with your audience.

Moderator: Madia Brown, Founder and CEO, Chief Storytelling Strategist, Brandire

Panelists:

- Orlando Ashford II, Lead Director, OD2 Consulting LLC
- Borzou Azabdaftari, Founder and Creative Director, NickelBronx
- Kevin Lee, Founder and CEO, Pulse
- Austin Sandler, Chief Innovation Officer, Pulse
- Tasha Stancil, Senior Account Director, Neoscape

WORKSHOPS

Workshop D: Mergers & Acquisitions Simplified | 143 C Leveraging Growth Opportunities Through Strategic Deals

Understand how mergers and acquisitions can serve as strategic tools for growth and resiliency. Experts will demystify the M&A process, outline key considerations for buyers and sellers, and provide guidance on maximizing value, navigating due diligence, and smoothly integrating businesses.

Moderator: Madia Brown, Founder and CEO, Chief Storytelling Strategist, Brandire

Panelists:

- Nelvin Joseph Adriatico, Vice President, Senior Business Banking, City National Bank
- Cary Hatch, Former CEO, MDB Communications
- Vernon Biggs, Vice President, Banker, J.P. Morgan Private Bank
- Marlon Griffith, Owner/Principal Litigator, The Griffith Law Group

Workshop E: Cybersecurity Essentials for Small Businesses | 143 B Protecting Your Business from Digital Threats and Ensuring Continuity

Equip yourself with essential cybersecurity knowledge to safeguard your small business from digital risks. This session covers affordable, actionable cybersecurity strategies, risk identification, data protection best practices, and steps to respond effectively to cyber incidents, ensuring minimal disruption to your operations.

Moderator: Angela Dingle, Chief Executive Officer, Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP)

Panelists:

- Matt Brown, Co-Founder & CEO, SharePoint, Inc.
- Michael A. Echols, President and CEO, Max Cybersecurity LLC

Workshop F: Financial Preparedness and Access to Capital | 143 A Securing Your Small Business's Financial Future in Volatile Market

Gain insights on maintaining financial health and resilience amid uncertainty. Learn effective methods for cash flow management, identifying funding sources, accessing grants and loans, and preparing financially for unforeseen disruptions. This workshop will empower you with financial strategies critical for long-term stability and growth.

Moderator: Aaron Fenwick, DC BizCAP Program Manager, Banking Bureau, District of Columbia Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking (DISB)

Panelists:

- Danny Aberra, Senior Vice President - Senior Business Banking Relationship Manager, Bank of America
- Justine Witkowska-Baker, Vice President/Business Development Manager, First National Bank
- Todd Monash, Banker, Mainstreet Bank
- Lisa Anderson, Founder and CEO, Anavo Transformation Solutions
- Messay Derebe, General Director, Washington Area Community Investment Fund

AGENDA

continued

WORKSHOPS

11:30AM – 12:30PM

Workshop A: AI for Small Business

Workshop B: Procurement for Small Business

Workshop C: Marketing Mastery

Workshop D: Mergers & Acquisitions Simplified

Workshop E: Cybersecurity Essentials for Small Businesses

Workshop F: Financial Preparedness and Access to Capital

SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS LUNCHEON

12:30PM – 2:30PM | 147 AB

MUSICAL SELECTION

Heru Peacock, Violinist

WELCOME ADDRESS

Chinyere Hubbard, President and CEO, DC Chamber of Commerce

GREETINGS

Jacquay Henderson, Founder and CEO, Square Peg Technologies LLC, and Co-Chair of the DC Chamber of Commerce Small Business Advisory Council

Ryan Chaffo, Senior Vice President – Business Banking Manager, City National Bank, and Co-Chair of the DC Chamber of Commerce Small Business Advisory Council

INVOCATION

Reverend Thomas L. Bowen, Founder and Chief Engagement Officer, EngageFaith

INTRODUCTIONS

Earle “Chico” Horton III, Esq., Founding Partner, Tiber Hudson LLC, and DC Chamber of Commerce Board Chair

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Nina Albert, Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development

REMARKS

Kenyan R. McDuffie, At-Large Councilmember, Chair, Committee on Business and Economic Development

SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS PRESENTATION

Rosemary Suggs-Evans, Director, DC Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD)

SMALL BUSINESS COACH'S CORNER

2:30PM – 3:30PM | 146 C

MAKERS MARKET & NETWORKING CLOSES

3:30PM | 147 AB

SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS PRESENTATION

2025 Award Winners



MADE IN DC MAKER OF THE YEAR

Calvin Hines Jr., EIGHTFOLD Farms DC LLC



CBE OF THE YEAR

Miles Sedgwick, Rana Labs, LLC



RETAILER OF THE YEAR

Fia Thomas, Fia's Fabulous Finds



SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Dash Kiridena, CODICE



SMALL BUSINESSPERSON OF THE YEAR

Monica Ray, Sycamore & Oak / Soul of DC



NONPROFIT OF THE YEAR

Ron Moten, Go GO Museum & Cafe - Don't Mute DC



SMALL BUSINESS CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

Patrice Cleary, Joia Burger & Purple Patch Restaurant



WOMAN IN BUSINESS CHAMPION AWARD

Kathy Luu, Spa Logic



YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Kelsey Nicole Nelson, KryptiaNN



**THANK YOU TO THE MEMBERS OF OUR SMALL
BUSINESS ADVISORY BOARD!**

Jacquay Henderson, Co-Chair

Ryan Chaffo, Co-Chair

Claudia Herrera

Kelvin Jeter

Susan Shorters

Aaron Fenwick

Kristen Barden

Ronnette Meyers

Nelvin Joseph Adriatico

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