NORTHSTAR

2018

EVENT WRAP-UP REPORT

Project NorthStar

October 3rd-5th, 2018
Philadelphia, PA

northstarphl.com | #NorthStar2018

Philadelphia is poised to make tech equitable

The inaugural Project NorthStar was created in partnership with the City of Philadelphia with a strong belief that there is boundless untapped tech talent in Black and Latinx communities that the world needs. And, that talented people from these communities have earned the right to be showcased in an uplifting space. For that reason, Black & Brown Founders remains dedicated to curating a tech conference that offers an experience that we know our people deserve, but rarely receive.

Intention and care went into every aspect of what we wanted NorthStar attendees to learn, feel, and share. From the front door to "The Backyard", we aimed to create enjoyable spaces that were conducive to making connections, leveling up, and allowing folks who are often "sprinkles of seasoning" in most spaces to bring their whole selves into a professional event full of people just like them.

We are grateful to Mayor Jim Kenney, the City of Philadelphia, our advisory committee, sponsors, programming partners, speakers, mentors, and community partners for their contributions. Project NorthStar would not be what it was without you.

Cheers,

Aniyia

Aniyia L. Williams, Executive Director, Black & Brown Founders

The Genesis of Project NorthStar

Project Northstar was born from an idea by Philadelphia's Mayor Jim Kenney. He was disappointed with the lack of diversity at well-known tech events. As the leader of a majority-minority city, Mayor Kenney saw an opportunity to create a high-caliber conference for underrepresented people in tech.

Soon after, Mayor Kenney connected with Aniyia Williams, Executive Director of Black & Brown Founders, and they were united in their ambition to bring a meaningful program to their hometown. The goal quickly went beyond diversity and inclusion, to addressing the growing wealth gap through innovation.

Presented in partnership between the City of Philadelphia and Black & Brown Founders, Project Northstar represents their shared vision.

What is Project NorthStar?

Project NorthStar is a 3-day tech conference that provides connections, education, and opportunities for current or aspiring entrepreneurs and professionals from the Black and Latinx community.

We are experiencing a dramatic demographic shift in America alongside a growing wealth gap. Project NorthStar is meant to increase the participation of Black and Latinx people in the innovation economy, which offers a great opportunity to create and grow wealth today.

We believe that the key to a thriving economic future for America is enabling tech innovation in ways that **everyone** can participate.

Why is this important?

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The world is changing, and the way society operates is changing, too.

The growth of global wealth and business is increasingly dependent on enhancing people's productivity and quality of life. Technology, knowledge and entrepreneurship are essential tools to deliver the products of the innovation economy, and we are already seeing it shift the focus of societies around the world.

Every industry is, or will be, changed in some way by the innovation economy, and we are in the early stages of those changes. That means that there is an opportunity for people to create profitable and sustainable solutions to the challenges of our new world.

ISSUES THAT MATTER

What Founders Wanted
_____

In a pre-event survey, here's a summary of what attendees said was most important to get out of the event.

- To build a community that is focused on supporting each other after the event

- Opportunities to grow professionally and expand networks

- To learn about funding, financing, and taxes

- To build strong connections

* Data shared in this report was collected in event surveys from participants.

What We Wanted

Project NorthStar featured talks, panels, mentor office hours, activations and networking sessions curated for the Black & Latinx community. Our intention was to teach, empower and connect. **91.6%** of surveyed attendees felt that the stated event goals were the right ones to focus on. The three goals were:

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Help entrepreneurs understand how to cultivate sustainable, cash-flow positive businesses.

PIPELINE Expand the skills and networks of talented workers and youth that will diversify the tech workforce.

RETENTION Establish partnerships and programs that will continue progress for entrepreneurs and workers of color beyond the event.

"Whether you're an aspiring entrepreneur, or in the thick of growing your business from scratch to scale, NorthStar is a great place to get inspired, informed, and connected with other entrepreneurs and investors who understand the unique challenges and opportunities of black and brown founders."

Quote from
#NorthStar2018 Attendee

What We Covered

NorthStar presented content that touched on bootstrapping, venture capital, alternative forms of funding, engineering, money management, marketing, design, emerging technologies and more.

INCLUDING

- Keynotes by Arlan Hamilton, Heather Hiles and other leaders
- I Bootstrapped a Business to Multi-Millions, You Can Too
- Building Infrastructure for Entry-Level Talent
- What It Takes to Lead Tech Teams
- Make Your Skills Make Sense: Building a Business Around You
- Make Money Moves: Learning the Foreign Language of Finance

EVENT PROGRAM

What We Covered

In addition to actionable content, we provided time for entrepreneurs to network, see what others were working on, and have one-on-one mentor sessions with investors and tech leaders.

MORE CONFERENCE ELEMENTS

- One-on-one mentor office hours

- Innovators Village, an exhibition featuring community organizations and startups

- Day 3 open for students and the public to attend for free

- Happy Hours and The Glow Up Celebration

- Conference app to connect participants

- Dance breaks, meditations, all-day food trucks in "The Backyard"

"It's important that we create our own narrative as black & brown communities. The mass narrative says that there are only a select few of us doing extraordinary things.

However, this conference proves that there are a multitude of us doing extraordinary things - our many stories are just not depicted or visible. I found my community and I found inspiration at Northstar conference. Brilliance was omnipresent."

Quote from
#NorthStar2018 Attendee

100%

of participants said they would attend Project NorthStar again.

Event Stats

476 in-person participants, including 85 students attended the conference.

There was an **84% attendance** rate (from 566 registrations).

Media and Livestream Stats

We livestreamed Project NorthStar's main stage presentations to its website, Periscope, Facebook and YouTube. This allowed **thousands** more people to participate.

- **3,663** livestream views*

- **1st trending spot** for #NorthStar2018 locally on Twitter on Day 2 of the conference (2nd spot on Day 1)

- **9.1M impressions** on Twitter

- **23 features in the media** with the readership of 14.9 million people

* Aggregated from all streaming channels: website, Periscope, Facebook, YouTube

Registrant Demographics

Project NorthStar is curated from a Black and/or Latinx perspective, but anyone who is genuinely eager to learn about navigating tech is welcome to attend and take part.
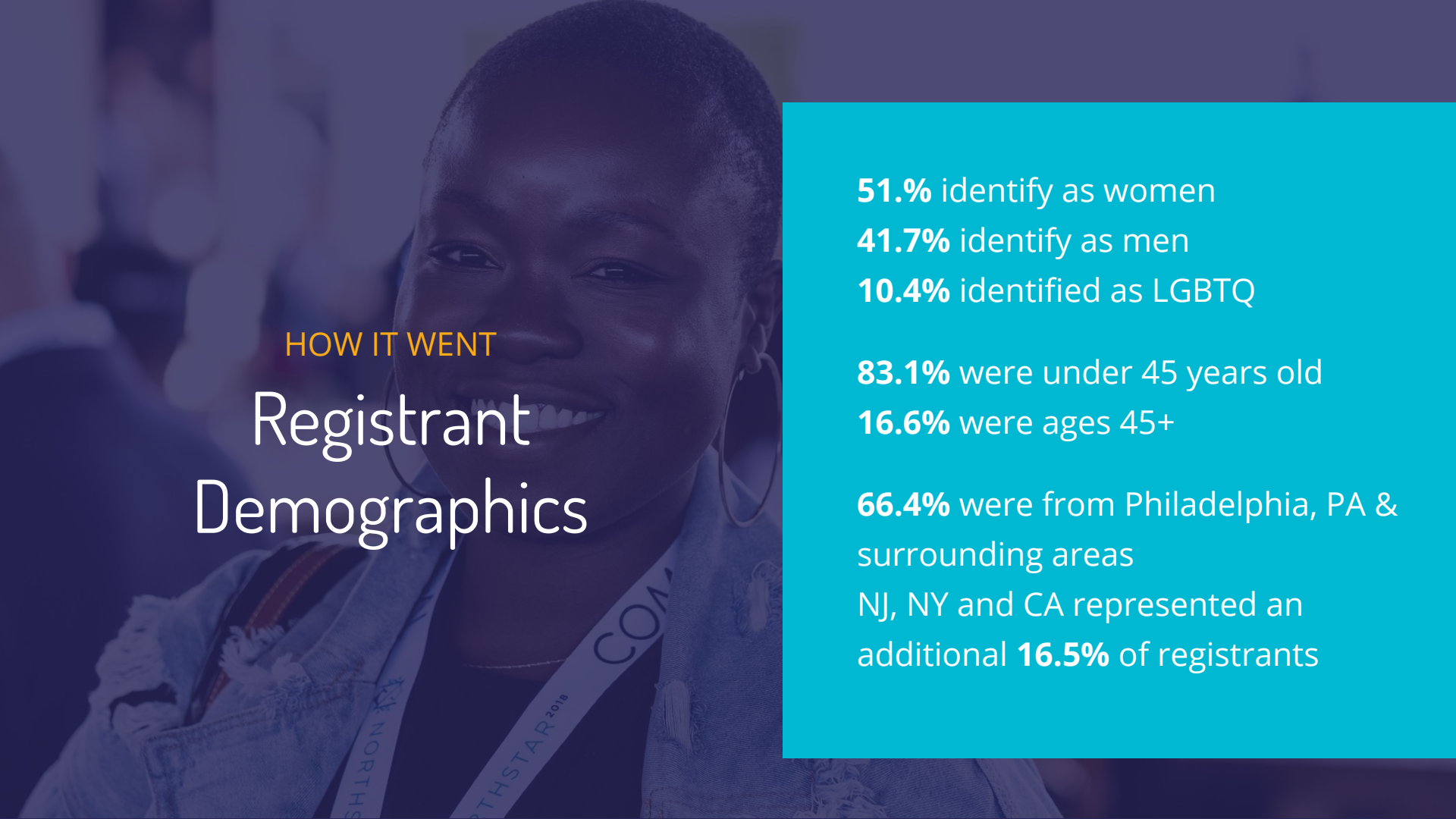
64.2% identify as Black

15.5% identify as Latinx

2.5% identify as Afro-Latinx

3.1% from a variety of interracial backgrounds

1% identify as Asian/Pacific Islander

8.2% identify as White

HOW IT WENT

Registrant Demographics

51.% identify as women
41.7% identify as men
10.4% identified as LGBTQ

83.1% were under 45 years old
16.6% were ages 45+

66.4% were from Philadelphia, PA & surrounding areas
NJ, NY and CA represented an additional **16.5%** of registrants

Scholarships & Discounts

This essential component of NorthStar was made possible by: W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Zebras Unite, and individual contributors.

General Admission to Project NorthStar was priced at an affordable $199, but to ensure participation from a wide range of attendees, we offered donated tickets, discounts, as well as scholarships. We also made Day 3 of Project NorthStar completely free for students and the public to attend.

The overall cost of an attendee to a 3-day high-caliber conference is significant, thus heavily subsidized by our sponsors, but additional funds were provided to further alleviate the financial burden of conference goers who needed help.

We provided scholarships to **82 people** and discounts to many more. The average applicant said **they could afford to pay $24**.

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"I truly felt the most comfortable at the NorthStar Conference than I have ever felt in my journey as an entrepreneur.

There was no need for inauthentic conversation or superficial connections. Folks were open to sharing and building each other's empires. I felt safe, seen, and inspired. I must come back."

Quote from
#NorthStar2018 Attendee

Speaker Demographics

Almost all of our speakers are Black and/or Latinx because we know that the lessons are much more powerful when the presenters looks like our audience and they deeply understand the challenges attendees are facing.

60.3% identify as Black

31.7% identify as Latinx

4.8% identify as Afro-Latinx

1.6% identify as White

Speaker Demographics

In sessions, we rarely talk about diversity and inclusion. Instead, we focus on sharing actionable information about how to build a profitable business or a successful career in tech.

61.3% identify as women
27.2% identify as men
1.6% gender non-binary
21.1% identified as LGBTQ

90.5% were under 45 years old
9.5% were ages 45+

33.3% were from Philadelphia, PA & surrounding areas
NJ, NY and CA represented an additional **40.8%** of speakers

53.7%

*of surveyed attendees are **currently** entrepreneurs. Many more are working toward becoming one.*

Track Participation

73.4% of attendees participated in the Entrepreneurship Track.

21.9% of attendees participated in the Careers Track.

4.7% of attendees participated in both conference tracks.

Only 10% of NorthStar registrants who aren't already entrepreneurs said they *DO NOT* plan to become one.

Business Goals

_____

We asked the registrants who are entrepreneurs what the primary goal is for their business. Here's what they said.

46% want to go BIG or go home and build a venture-backable business

22.4% don't care about the business size, just want their product to exist

18.6% want their startup to generate passive/additional income for themselves

13% felt that none of these statements applied to them

Business Stage

We asked the registrants who are entrepreneurs how far along they are in launching or building their tech business. Here's what they said.

18% are at idea stage

26.7% are prototyping

17.4% have built an MVP, but still figuring out product market fit

19.3% have built an MVP and have product-market fit

18% have a fully developed product, customer base, and predictable revenue

57.1% are not generating revenue

Business Time Spent

We asked the registrants who are entrepreneurs how much time they are spending on their venture. Here's what they said.

44.7% are working on it full time

26.7% are working on it part time

28.6% are moonlighting (working on it here and there, apart from another job)

Business Financing

We asked the registrants who are entrepreneurs how they plan to finance their startup. Here's what they said.

41% from bootstrapping or revenue-based growth

26.7% from investors

10.6% from grants

2.5% from crowdfunding

.6% from business loans

18.6% said some other form of financing

Tech Employees

We asked the registrants who are employed at tech companies -- **27.5%** of non-entrepreneurs at NorthStar -- how they got their first job in tech.

Here's what they said.

45% referred by a friend

22.5% attended a recruitment event

20% applied directly from the company's website

10% placed through a program

2.5% contacted by a recruiter

Tech Employees

15% of registrants who are not entrepreneurs at NorthStar were trying to get hired in a tech job.

We asked them what kinds of roles they are interested in. Here's what they said.

44.4% want to be an engineer or write code

11.1% want a marketing or communications role

0% want to be a product manager

0% want to be a designer

0% want to work in sales/bizdev

44.4% said they want to do "something else" in tech (not specified)

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"Project NorthStar is not a 'hype conference' for you to stunt on Instagram.

It provides you with the toolkit so that your bank account matches your social media following. "

Quote from
#NorthStar2018 Attendee

What Attendees Gained

In a post-event survey, here's a summary of what attendees said they want to do next, based on their experience at the conference.

Black & Brown Founders is proud to boast a community of lifelong learners.

- **94.2%** plan to apply the actionable info they learned at the conference

- **44.2%** are using or planning to use cloud computing products

- **38.5%** of the attendees want to learn to code

- **59.6%** are interested in the Black & Brown Founders' Bootstrapping Bootcamp

What Was Most Useful

We asked registrants what elements of the event gave them the most value.

Here's what they said.

- **39.1%** Networking
- **32.1%** Education
- **15.5%** Mentorship
- Other responses all came in the low digits

Ideas for the Future

Here are some suggestions that attendees shared that they'd like to see next time around.

- Would like to add a Pitch Competition to the event

- Want to learn more about B2B strategies

- Would like to have on-site legal advice

- Want to see "sustainability" as a highlighted topic

- Increased youth participation

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"The NorthStar Conference lived up to its name. Just as the North Star led our people to liberation from bondage back during slavery days, the NorthStar Conference is a powerful initiative that is leading our people to economic liberation."

Quote from
#NorthStar2018 Attendee

A HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR FEARLESS SPONSORS

We see you. We hear you. We have nothing but love for you.

Thank you to our many partners and supporters. Our Advisory Committee held us accountable to creating a conference that would address important needs while remaining authentic to Philadelphia. Our Programming Partners allowed us develop a program that would meet the needs of our attendees. Our Community Partners helped us get the word out and get people in the room.

We especially acknowledge LaborX, "the linked in for the linked out", who committed time and resources to engage Philly-area tech training programs, their trainees, and their alumni to learn jobseeking skills. REC Philly worked with us to find local artists so we could showcase their talent and bring joy to our audience. Black Girl Ventures and PitchBlack engaged us in thinking about how our community can invest in itself. And ThePLUG helped us communicate with people of color about Project NorthStar nationwide.

We are also grateful to the many exceptional leaders who submitted talks to speak at NorthStar through our call for entries. There was so much more talent out there that we wish could have put onstage, and will look for other ways to highlight these important voices.

Read More about Project NorthStar

[The bar is set high for Philly's first NorthStar Conference](#) (Technical.ly Philly)

[Tackling tech's diversity problem in Philadelphia](#) (Al Dia News)

[Here's Everything You Need to Know About Philly's First Project NorthStar Conference](#) (Philly Mag)

[New Philly conference aims to draw communities of color to the city's tech sector](#) (WHYY)

[Empowering Diverse Startups: Microsoft joins forces with Backstage Capital and Black & Brown Founders](#) (Microsoft for Startups Blog)

[Project Northstar Conference](#) (NBC10 News)

[Project NorthStar kicks off to be a guiding light for tech jobs](#) (Philadelphia Tribune)

[Arlan Hamilton highlights her journey during Project Northstar conference](#) (Philadelphia Tribune)

[Project NorthStar tech conference aims for minority leaders of industry to be the norm](#) (KYW 1060)

[Here are 3 choice quotes from NorthStar 2018 so far](#) (Technical.ly Philly)

[Year after SXSW, Philadelphia makes good on Project Northstar](#) (Philadelphia Business Journal)

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Project NorthStar is an initiative led by Black & Brown Founders, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, providing Black and Latinx entrepreneurs best practices and community to build successful tech companies with modest resources.