

# DEI IMPACT awards





## A NOTE FROM SMART ENERGY DECISIONS

Janice Rogers, Corporate Vice President, Human Resources  
And ESG, Diversified Communications

DEI  
IMPACT  
awards

As a leader in the global events and conference industry, we at Diversified Communications recognize our responsibility to drive discussions and actively engage in principles of racial equity, social justice, and inclusion. We believe that we are a richer and stronger organization when we have these principles in place, making for a more equitable and welcoming work environment for all. I'm proud of the work we've done with our DEI program.

Our mission includes the acknowledgment that change begins from within. We want to educate ourselves to champion diversity, equity and inclusion. We want to foster work environments that are welcoming for all and inclusive of everyone, whether it's at the office or at our events. We ensure that our external work reflects the internal belief and mission of fostering diversity, equity and inclusion by encouraging these types of discussions at our events and with our industry associations. We actively partner with community organizations that lead the way in social justice work to effect necessary changes where we work and live.

With this mission in mind, we've created several initiatives, including educating our employees on inclusion, unconscious bias, and diversity to foster a more educated and inclusive workforce. We've focused on removing bias from the recruiting and interviewing process and broadening our candidate pools to attract more diverse prospective employees. We've brought DEI into the conversation and the agendas



Janice Rogers, Corporate Vice President, Human Resources and ESG, Diversified Communications

of our events through programming and speaker selection. We have also partnered with a number of community organizations that represent underrecognized populations, giving our time and resources to support them in their important work.

The best compliment we can hear about our program at Diversified is when an employee tells us that our DEI mission is part of our culture and evidenced in our actions, not just words on a website or in an exercise checking the box. This DEI Impact Awards program is a perfect example of that commitment.



Left: Janice Rogers, Corporate Vice President, Human Resources and ESG, Diversified Communications  
Right: Alexandra Failla, Corporate Sustainability Manager, Diversified Communications





## A NOTE FROM NRG

Jennifer Brunelle, Vice President,  
Talent Development And Diversity, NRG

DEI  
IMPACT  
awards

We're honored to be the exclusive sponsor for the DEI Impact Awards. At NRG, we are committed to ensuring that every voice is valued, and we are excited to have this opportunity to recognize peers who are equally dedicated to making diversity, equity, and inclusion a core focus of their organization.

In 2019, we elevated inclusion and diversity in the workplace by making it one of our five core values. This decision was essential to becoming the type of organization that we envision — one where people can bring their authentic selves to work and be met with respect, acceptance, understanding, and celebration of their differences. We made this decision to formally convey to our employees and stakeholders the importance of DEI as part of our corporate culture.

One of the ways we help our employees embrace their unique knowledge, skills, and perspectives is through our business resource groups, which are employee-led, open groups that allow networking and collaboration based on common interests. Efforts like this help us recognize and celebrate the differences that shape us and the diversity that makes our organization stronger.



Jennifer Brunelle, Vice President,  
Talent Development and Diversity, NRG

Our commitment to DEI allows us to build a unified culture with a strong sense of belonging that helps lead us to better collaboration and business performance. It is all of our shared responsibility to continue working toward diversity, equity, and inclusion in our everyday lives in workplaces. We congratulate the DEI Impact Award winners who are leading by example and setting the stage for a more inclusive and harmonious workplace.



Left: Jennifer Brunelle, Vice President, Talent Development and Diversity, NRG  
Right: Greg Kandankulam, Director, Sustainability Advisory, NRG



## DEI IMPACT AWARDS STEERING COMMITTEE AND JUDGES



The 2023 DEI Impact Awards honors efforts in diversity, equity and inclusion in clean energy. Nominations were accepted for DEI projects and industry influencers from commercial, industrial, institutional and government organizations across seven categories: Project/Initiative, Mentorship, Team, Catalyst for Change, Pay It Forward, Partnership, and One to Watch. Smart Energy Decisions created these awards with guidance from our Steering Committee consisting of energy customer peers and industry experts, most of whom also participated as judges for the awards. Award winners were celebrated at SED's Net Zero Forum in September.



Amy Bond,  
T-Mobile



Peter Kelly-Detwiler,  
NorthBridge Energy  
Partners LLC



Elizabeth Lucente,  
Target Corporation  
(Steering Committee only)



Barbara Moore,  
Philadelphia Energy  
Authority



Rich Perry,  
Equinix



Janice Rogers,  
Diversified  
Communications



Rowena Striff,  
Lockheed Martin



Victor Udo,  
Bucknell University



# MENTORSHIP AWARD

Marianella Franklin, Chief Sustainability Officer,  
The University Of Texas Rio Grande Valley



Marianella Franklin earned this Mentorship Award for her work on the Graduate Sustainability Research Fellowship at UTRGV. With over 65 fellowship awards granted, and over 10 countries represented thus far, the Fellowship promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion across all spectrums of the program — from the students accepted to the communities it serves. Graduate students from all disciplines at the University are invited to apply, contributing to wide-ranging subject matter that includes renewable energy, combating food insecurity, design and construction, and much more.



Marianella Franklin, Chief Sustainability Officer,  
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

towards sustainability efforts with and for student success. It promotes a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for student scholars to understand how sustainability works as a tool, with the utmost value in contributing to a greater life today and for many generations to come.

The Fellowship is two semesters long and requires rigorous study and a cooperative effort from the graduate student fellows and a faculty advisor. The research projects contribute to, and align with, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and utilizes quantitative and qualitative data to show how the fellow's subject matters show clear and positive connections to the social, economic, and environmental systems at the local, national, and global levels. The Fellowships provide a superlative opportunity for mentorship and research skills advancement through student and faculty-advisor partnerships.

The Graduate Sustainability Research Fellowship was designed to lead innovation and serve as a model for institutions to build upon the added value of sustainability in research. This program collaborates with different faculty members wishing to contribute their leadership and expertise

### THE JUDGES SAY

*"This fellowship program, under Marianella Franklin's guidance, is opening doors in a variety of disciplines that allow students to become stewards of the environment and to continue educating communities about sustainable practices."*

### ACCEPTING THE AWARD

"For me, mentoring is really about the relationships we establish with all those who have that drive to change and improve the quality of life for all," said Marianella Franklin. "The students in this program really care about the future, but do not have much experience just yet. Being able to provide them with a little bit of guidance is all it takes. I have to thank SED and all of you here because it's through conferences like this and the relationships that we established here that make my work so easy. I take this information and share it with everyone, especially those who care. May the love and respect of all of humanity drive you to continue improving our quality of life now and in the future. Thank you so much!"





**PAY IT FORWARD AWARD**  
**Susanna Webber, Senior Vice President,**  
**Global Supplier Management Group, And Global Workplace**  
**Enterprise Services And Chief Procurement Officer,**  
**Merck And Co.**



In her role at Merck, Susanna Webber is responsible for all aspects of strategic sourcing and procurement, supplier development and performance management, process, operations and strategy, and global workplace enterprise services. Through her leadership in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), the company has made progress toward Merck’s climate action goals, including the development of tools and processes needed to lower its carbon footprint. Merck is on track to achieve carbon neutrality (Scope 1 & 2) by 2025 and is working towards transitioning to renewables to meet its 2025 renewable energy target, as well.

Susanna has managed to shift the organization to increase its focus on ESG initiatives and is leveraging various parts of her team in logistics, energy and sustainability, and supplier diversity to



Susanna Webber, Senior Vice President, Global Supplier Management Group and Global Workplace Enterprise Services and Chief Procurement Officer, Merck and Co.

**THE JUDGES SAY**

**“It is commendable that, under Susanna’s leadership, a company of this size and scope is making good progress in partnering with diverse suppliers and serving diverse communities to meet substantial goals.”**

make these initiatives a reality. From a social perspective, Merck is committed to ensuring that economic inclusion and supplier diversity are integrated into strategic sourcing and procurement processes to generate efficiency, innovation, and increased opportunities for first- and second-tier diverse suppliers. Susanna is committed to accomplishing this mission by establishing and supporting partnerships with the diverse business community, developing these businesses for growth, and engaging with community organizations that share Merck’s commitment. In 2022, Merck spent \$2.3 billion with small and diverse suppliers, supporting over 30,400 jobs, and in turn, creating a \$4.8 billion economic impact through supplier diversity. Susanna also worked with external partners to host workshops with internal teams to create specific initiatives for each team.

**ACCEPTING THE AWARD**

“I’m honored to be here on behalf of Susanna and our team,” said Douglas Yunaska, Director of Energy and Sustainability at Merck’s Center for Excellence, accepting the award on behalf of Susanna Webber. “We’re proud to be making meaningful progress towards our climate partnerships with diverse businesses, developing these businesses for growth, and engaging with community organizations that share our commitment to important social issues like economic inclusion and diversity.”

Adding a challenge to the audience, Yunaska said, “All of us are committed to driving towards a net zero future, whether we have public goals yet or not, This is a good opportunity to leverage diverse partners and diverse colleagues, and to get there by investing in our sites and our communities.”



Douglas Yunaska, Director of Energy and Sustainability, Merck’s Center for Excellence





# PROJECT/INITIATIVE AWARD

## Energy & Global Infrastructure, Google Energy Team



Google's Energy Team is responsible for power procurement, energy policy and energy infrastructure development for Google's global data centers. In March 2023, Google and Sol Systems collaborated to create a groundbreaking tax equity, community investment and impact partnership, including valuable input from local community-serving partners. The approach addressed both the expansion and generation of renewable energy and the long-term economic and well-being of local communities. This enables the development of new solar and storage projects while creating a Community Investment Fund to help reduce the energy burden of low- and moderate-income households, while increasing their access to the benefits from the transition to a cleaner, more efficient energy future.

The goals of the project include bringing clean energy to the electrical grid; increasing new renewable energy and battery storage resources in North and



Christopher Scott, Lead, Energy and Location Strategy, Google

### THE JUDGES SAY

*"I like the broad scope of this effort and recognition that efficiency must come before renewables, especially for the LMI (low-to-moderate income) community affected by energy poverty. In addition, it's great to see renewables and storage added to the southeastern U.S., an area somewhat slow to adopt renewables to date."*

South Carolina, a region with relatively low renewable energy penetration; reducing Google's carbon footprint; and advancing the company's goal to operate 24/7 carbon-free by 2030.

This partnership is the first of its kind to pair tax equity investment and community investment, a truly groundbreaking move that goes beyond just investing in clean energy. The goal is to scale this program under this partnership as well as with other investors and renewable project developers.

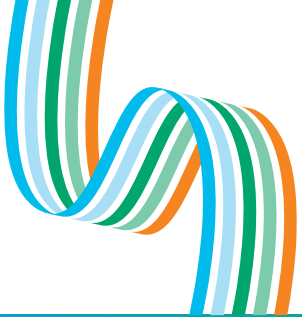
The program has already demonstrated commendable progress, leading to healthier and safer homes through critical repairs and access to energy efficiency upgrades. According to the program partners' experiences and corroborated by data from the U.S. Department of Energy, households have experienced an average of 25% savings on their energy and electricity bills.

### ACCEPTING THE AWARD

"On behalf of Google's Energy Team, I want to say we're very grateful to receive this DEI Impact Award," said Christopher Scott, Lead for Energy and Location Strategy at Google. "But really, all the recognition goes to our community partners in North Carolina and South Carolina that participate in this program and continue to walk with us in our energy equity journey. For my part, I've been honored to have shepherded this initiative internally at Google. I also want to recognize my predecessor, Chris Taylor, the instigator of this initiative. At Google, we fundamentally believe that to successfully decarbonize our grids and our energy systems, everyone has to be involved. That's why I'm confident that we'll continue to forge new relationships with communities at the frontlines of climate change. I think we're just at the beginning of this work and more good is to come."



Google Energy Team



**TEAM AWARD**  
**Energy Branch, Office Of Public Housing Programs,**  
**U.S. Department Of Housing And Urban Development**



The Energy Branch of the Office of Public Housing Programs at HUD was created in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to develop and implement energy efficiency incentive programs for the over 3,000 public housing authorities (PHAs) in the United States and its territories. These housing authorities are challenged with many competing priorities to provide housing to low-income, disabled, and elderly populations. The Energy Branch works with a number of stakeholders to encourage investment in energy and water efficiency infrastructure, as well as renewable energy, through the administration of several programs and the development of policies to increase energy equity.

The Energy Branch has implemented four programs to expand the capacity of public housing authorities to improve energy and water efficiency, implement renewable energy, and reduce carbon emissions. Programs include Energy Performance Contracts, a Rate Reduction Incentive



Dr. Charles Marshall III, Energy Director, Energy Branch, Office of Public Housing Programs, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**THE JUDGES SAY**

**“A wonderful aspect about implementing these programs is that agencies’ operating budgets were not reduced along with cost savings — funds were allowed to be applied to other energy initiatives. Each of these programs required a lot of effort to develop, and entailed the collaboration of departments working cross-functionally.”**

(RRI), the Small Rural Frozen Rolling Base (SRFRB) and the Utility Partnership Program. So far, 150 PHAs are participating in these programs, and the Energy Branch is continuing to roll out opportunities to expand the program among as many as 3,000 of these Authorities.

In 2021, the Energy Branch implemented the SRFRB program to provide opportunities for the 1,600+ small and rural housing authorities throughout the U.S. and its territories. The program has grown 32% over the last three years as more technical assistance is being developed for the small and rural housing authorities and over \$1 million has been paid to small and rural housing authorities. In addition, the RRI program has grown 68% since 2020, providing over \$86 million in savings benefits to housing authorities in 2023. The EPC program, the oldest program at over 30 years old, provides \$302 million in savings to finance infrastructure investment in PHAs.

**ACCEPTING THE AWARD**

“Thank you to everyone responsible for this award,” said Dr. Charles Marshall III, Energy Director, Energy Branch, Office of Public Housing Programs at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. “This is difficult work, but it’s very important work. DEI is one of our goals, so this means a lot to the department, and definitely encourages the many people who are trying to make a difference in these communities, across the country, and in our territory. Thank you!”







# PROJECT/INITIATIVE AWARD

## Boston Medical Center's Brockton Behavioral Health Center



The Brockton Behavioral Health Center, part of the BMC Health System, provides innovative care to people with substance use disorders and mental illness. The 106-bed facility, which opened in 2022, was intentionally designed not only to address unmet needs for behavioral health care across the region but also to advance BMC's commitment to climate justice. Furthermore, the Center is an important part of BMC's goal to be carbon-neutral by 2030. The building itself is a first-of-its-kind, net-zero behavioral health facility that runs on renewable, sustainable energy through solar panels and geothermal wells.

The Center helps to ensure BMC is making a positive impact on its environment while benefiting patients and communities, which have been disproportionately impacted by climate change. The Center has also worked with community partners to engage diverse communities and grow its mental health workforce. Part of these efforts include a novel grant, the Behavioral Health



Cory Pouliot, Senior Director, Facilities Operations, Boston Medical Center's Brockton Behavioral Health Center

Workforce Initiative. The intention of the grant is to engage with people of color from Brockton and surrounding areas who do not have any formal college education and are interested in the mental health field. Once accepted, participants are trained to become certified Behavioral Health Technicians and hired as mental health specialists, allowing them to continue to develop their careers. Brockton graduated its first cohort earlier in 2023, and a second cohort with four participants is starting later this year.

The Center is focused on hiring and retaining staff and leadership that represents the population it serves. The team in place is multilingual — including Spanish, Cape Verdean, Haitian Creole, and American Sign Language — multicultural, and is inclusive of the LBGTQIA+ community. Sixty-five percent of Brockton's employees are from neighboring communities, and more than 55 percent identify as people of color.

### THE JUDGES SAY

**"BMC Brockton Behavioral Health Center checks all the boxes of what the DEI awards are all about. It demonstrates a deep understanding of the true meaning of DEI and how it fuels every person it touches. BMC Brockton Behavioral Health Center's extraordinary leadership and day-to-day practices are exceptional in every way."**

### ACCEPTING THE AWARD

"First, I'd like to thank Smart Energy Decisions, NRG, and the selection committee for this award," said Cory Pouliot, Senior Director, Facilities Operations. "At Boston Medical Center, we have a motto, 'Exceptional care without exception.' This project clearly met those criteria. Our Brockton Behavioral Center is the first net-zero behavioral healthcare hospital in the nation. I have to acknowledge some of the talented teams that worked on this project, starting with our architectural team. With great ingenuity, they found a design that used the space that we had to meet all of our needs and challenges. Our engineering team took the building we were given to the next level. They incorporated systems and technologies to make the building net-zero by paying extremely close attention to our very tight budget. At the end of the day, we have an incredible, much-needed facility to support the community and our patients for many years to come."



BMC Brockton Behavioral Health Center





# TEAM AWARD

Sustainability Department, New York City Housing Authority



The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is North America’s largest public housing authority with over 500,000 low- and moderate-income New Yorkers living across NYCHA’s portfolio. NYCHA serves NYC’s disadvantaged communities and promotes equity through its mission to provide quality housing for New Yorkers that is sustainable, inclusive, and safe while fostering opportunities for economic mobility. NYCHA has an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI), which carries out Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Fair Housing investigative functions that enhance and develop other areas related to training, workforce data, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs.

The Sustainability Department was first formed as the Energy Department in 1997 and transformed into the Sustainability Department in the early 2000s. The department was first focused on sustainable building upgrades and energy efficiency; they eventually committed to



### THE JUDGES SAY

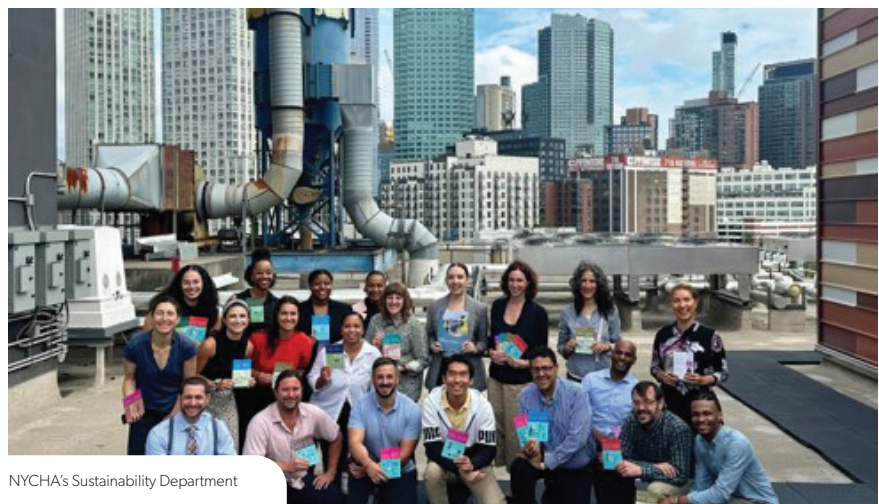
*“This is how you get it done! Engage and involve the community you serve. This team measures success by lives touched, improved, and uplifted. It’s a shining example of what inclusion is all about.”*

including resident-focused initiatives that would increase resident participation in department projects, as well as empower them to pursue their own sustainability careers and initiatives. The department launched the Clean Energy Academy to train residents to join the green and clean workforce. A program was developed to give residents grants to lead their own sustainability projects. They have also partnered with a community-based organization, Green City Force, to build out urban farms at its developments.

The department includes residents in its procurement practices to help NYCHA make informed decisions on capital projects and ensure that residents have input on vendor selection. The department remains committed to empowering low-to-moderate-income residents to be involved in NYCHA’s greener and more sustainable future.

### ACCEPTING THE AWARD

“NYCHA’s Sustainability Department is driven by the desire to serve our community by implementing innovative sustainability or energy projects. We strive to empower our low-to-moderate income residents to share their diverse voices in our decision-making from procurement to design to construction, ensure their community is cleaner and greener and thrives in a more sustainable future.”



NYCHA’s Sustainability Department





## PARTNERSHIP AWARD PSE&G Clean Energy Jobs Program



PSE&G's Clean Energy Jobs Program is a public-private workforce development initiative dedicated to driving meaningful change in the clean energy industry by creating opportunities for all, fostering an inclusive environment, and empowering individuals from underrepresented backgrounds to succeed. The team firmly believes that diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential pillars for a sustainable and thriving clean energy sector. The program's primary objectives are to create 2,000 jobs for low- and middle-income residents throughout New Jersey and, to create and expand opportunities for diverse suppliers in the delivery of energy efficiency programs.

The program is a collaboration between PSE&G, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and more than 40 partnerships with public, private, and community organizations. The achievements of this program to date include hiring more than 2,200 individuals



Sandeep Blah, Project Manager,  
Clean Energy Jobs Program, PSE&G

### THE JUDGES SAY

**"I am impressed by the audacity and scope of this effort, involving dozens of vendors, community groups and other strategic partners to create a diversified workforce to get the efficiency work done. Studies for the past 30 years have amply demonstrated the local economic benefits from efficiency investments. This effort takes that a step further. Well done!"**

through June 2023 — beating the target deadline by more than a year — and training 400 energy efficiency program employees through a monthly program. Clean Energy Jobs also on-boarded strategic community organizations that resulted in an increase in diverse hiring. The program is partnering with the African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ and Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of NJ to sponsor and coordinate masterclass business training for 100 companies.

The On-the-Job Training Program is currently facilitating Cohort 3 with 22 positions and Cohort 4 with 28 positions. The program has also identified more than 55 wraparound support services, which are sponsored by PSE&G and offered to potential candidates. A Clean Energy Jobs Program platform has been established for the general public to apply for positions, which currently has more than 70 job openings from more than 25 companies.

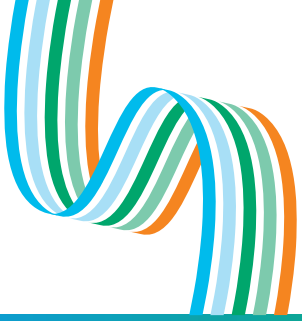
### ACCEPTING THE AWARD

"Thank you so much for the award, especially to Smart Energy Decisions and NRG", said Sandeep Blah, Project Manager for the Clean Energy Jobs Program at PSE&G. "Our program started in 2021 as a light for many New Jersey residents to help them not just find jobs but to build their careers. We want to build a strong workforce for the clean energy industry."



PSE&G Team





# CATALYST FOR CHANGE AWARD

Dr. Sarah Porter-Liddell, Dean of Students and Equitable Community  
Bard College at Simon's Rock



In addition to revamping the college's hiring and onboarding procedures and processes, Dr. Sarah Porter-Liddell helped lead the renovation of the Owl's Nest Facility. This facility started as a space for DEI efforts and has expanded into an event space for the community, a student work area, and a space for sensitive discussions. Dr. Porter-Liddell worked to ensure that the project met the triple bottom line of Sustainability — covering Social, Environmental and Economic impact — which is one of the core tenets of her strategic plan.

A colleague noted, "Colleges move at a glacial speed, but in a few short years, Sarah has changed how this place is run. It is invaluable to have a dean advocating



Dr. Sarah Porter-Liddell, Dean of Students and Equitable Community, Bard College at Simon's Rock

### THE JUDGES SAY

"Dr. Porter-Liddell has made excellent progress in a variety of areas in a short amount of time."

for sustainability in such a forthright manner. Simon's Rock has always been a very progressive place, but Sarah has taken a small department and revamped, restructured, and revitalized with an unwavering commitment to the principles of DEI. She has made the Office of Equity and Inclusion even more inclusive."

Among Dr. Porter-Liddell's accomplishments is a new, more accessible hiring process. Through the combined use of videos and live events, training was shortened and made drastically more approachable. Thanks to these changes, the college has an equitable, standardized hiring process across many different departments.

### ACCEPTING THE AWARD

"It is a great pleasure to accept this award for my friend Dr. Sarah Porter Liddell," said Jason Maronde, Energy and Special Projects, Bard College at Simon's Rock. "I know she was very excited to be here in person and accept this award. But I'm also excited to announce Sarah has been named our new Dean of Students and Equitable Community. In this role, Sarah will continue to oversee the Center for Equity Inclusion and Community and the Bias Response Team and will now oversee the work of campus life and campus safety. Under Sarah's leadership, Simon's Rock will continue to create structures in both campus life and equity and inclusion that build a strong community for all."



Jason Maronde, Energy and Special Projects, Bard College at Simon's Rock



## PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Danielle Decatur, Director of Environmental Justice  
Microsoft



Microsoft is committed to building a just, equitable, and sustainable future in the United States and around the world. In her position as Director of Environmental Justice, Danielle Decatur leads the company’s strategy toward a measurable, positive impact on the climate resilience and capacities of under-resourced communities. Strategies include the development of novel procurement approaches that address equity and increase diversity in the clean energy supply chain, as well as provide resources for justice-centered and community-led sustainability initiatives. She has explained, “It’s my job to create that architecture within our company to help folks connect to that mission and understand how their jobs can be a part of that goal.”

One such partnership described in the nomination was with Solar Stewards in their effort to secure funding from a



Danielle Decatur, Director of Environmental Justice, Microsoft

### THE JUDGES SAY

“I am impressed by the ‘environmental justice’ lens that Danielle leads with. This is an excellent partnership that has been led by a woman but also acknowledges the women behind the scenes who are committed to making things happen.”

Department of Energy contest recognizing novel solutions for the deployment of solar and equity, respectively. With a deadline looming and a significant funding opportunity on the line, Danielle and her team at Microsoft effectively completed the contracting phase in a record three weeks to ensure that Solar Stewards’ goal was met. This consideration to go above and beyond internal processes and the status quo to see women and minority-owned small businesses succeed is indicative of the impact that Danielle has internally at Microsoft and in the diverse business community. While many hear about the success of headline-making projects, this nomination highlights work that doesn’t get as much attention as it should, as well as the woman behind the scenes making it happen.

### ACCEPTING THE AWARD

“Danielle Decatur is a force of nature”, said Michelle Lancaster, Global Sustainability Strategy and GTM Leader at Microsoft, accepting the award on behalf of Danielle. “She is incredibly grateful to her cross-industry collaborators and her Microsoft colleagues for their shared commitment to DEI and action towards a clean energy transition. When we think about the clean energy transition at Microsoft, now largely thanks to Danielle, it is because we’re thinking about it in the way of equal distribution of benefits. We need a more reliable grid but we also need a grid that benefits everyone and that is the work that she has set out to do. There is a lot of work left to do and a lot more trust to build, but Danielle is honored and inspired by whatever role she can play in advancing a sustainable future. So, on behalf of Danielle and Microsoft, thank you.”



Michelle Lancaster, Global Sustainability Strategy and GTM Leader, Microsoft





## PROJECT/INITIATIVE AWARD

UAB Sustainability  
University of Alabama at Birmingham

# DEI IMPACT awards

The UAB Solar House and Sustainable Community, run by the UAB Sustainability Program, was constructed as part of the Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon competition. The 1,000-square-foot house was designed and built by students with the goal of maximizing the energy efficiency of the house without sacrificing comfort, livability, and style. Recent additions include a remote microgrid, a rainwater collection system, and produce and native habitat gardens.

The site is managed by Americorps Vista members. The objectives are to study self-sufficiency in energy, food production, and waste practices and to share the space as a demonstration for all communities. The site is open to visitors for tours and meetings with a target audience of students ranging from sixth grade through higher education, as well as community organizations.



Bambi Ingram, Sustainability Director,  
University of Alabama at Birmingham

### THE JUDGES SAY

**"This is an awesome initiative and grassroots campaign that could educate and positively influence future generations. I especially appreciate that it has expanded into collaborative community partnerships that are developing microgrids to further its impact."**

Alabama has one of the highest poverty rates in the nation, and its price for electricity is also high, so UAB works with area churches, non-profits, and schools that serve primarily African-American constituents to collaborate on programs.

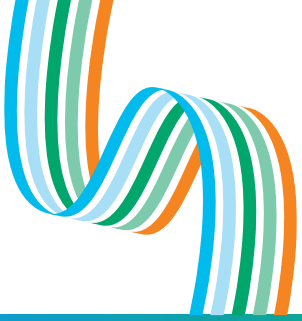
UAB Sustainability is also working with the Restored Sight Community Church, and the C3 Green Cooperative to plan and fund solar power and remote microgrids for their operations. C3 supports youth education in self-sufficiency through year-round food production in solar-powered hoop houses. The Restored Sight Church distributes thousands of meals each month and struggles to pay electricity bills for their freezers. Both groups are working with the Solar House and Sustainable Community to pattern their operations after UAB's model to collaborate with solar companies and seek outside funding.

### ACCEPTING THE AWARD

Bambi Ingram, Sustainability Director at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, noted, "Our project is a 100% solar-powered home that is 100% off the electrical grid. We have a remote microgrid in the back and there's enough storage for a planned edition of three tiny homes. We're located 12 miles away from the most polluting coal fired power plant in the nation and our area's residents pay the third highest energy bills in the country. Most of our visitors have never seen a solar panel and don't think about where their electricity comes from. We're working to change that. Look us up at UAB Solar House and Sustainable Community and please come and visit us! Thanks so much for the team at Smart Energy Decisions."



UAB Sustainability Team and Community



# ONE TO WATCH AWARD

## Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership at The City College of New York



In January 2023, the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership at The City College of New York launched the Colin Powell Bloom Energy Innovation Fellowship. This initiative, conceived in partnership with Bloom Energy, aims to diversify the ranks of leaders in the clean energy and sustainability industries and offers an extraordinary opportunity for talented students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds to receive deep mentorship, professional development, and paid summer internships at Bloom Energy’s San Jose headquarters.

The first cohort is made up of twelve students, all of whom are people of color from low-income communities. Selected students attended professional development workshops facilitated by esteemed CCNY faculty members during the spring semester to enhance their skills and prepare for a successful internship experience. The ultimate goal of this program is to cultivate a diverse and talented pool of professionals who can contribute to the growth of the clean



Ashif Hassan, Corporate Partnerships Manager, Office of Student Success, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, CCNY

### THE JUDGES SAY

**“I like the commitment of both parties and, in particular, Bloom’s commitment to making a space for diverse applicants in their workforce. I am also impressed by the commitment to follow up and evaluate the durability of the results.”**

energy industry and make a positive impact in their fields. The program equips fellows with technical knowledge and skills, and emphasizes the importance of leadership, effective communication, and ethical decision-making in the context of clean energy innovation. Fellows are encouraged to think critically, challenge existing paradigms, and develop solutions to address pressing energy and environmental challenges.

The Fellowship aligns with the core values and mission of the Colin Powell School, starting from the premise that the future requires globally minded, diverse leaders with deep training prepared to lead across industries and in every sector, with bold reimagining of ways to address our world’s current challenges and inequities.

The judges called this program an inspiration to those in the clean energy industry to “walk the walk” of supporting DEI, clean energy, and enabling our future leaders to greater heights.

### ACCEPTING THE AWARD

“On behalf of the Powell School, we want to thank the SED team,” said Ashif Hassan, Corporate Partnerships Manager, Office of Student Success, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, CCNY. “If you don’t know about the Colin Powell School at the City College of New York, we have 4000 students and we’re growing. Our student body is made up of 80% people of color, often the first in their family to go to college, and half of them are from immigrant households. This initiative and all the fellowship programs that we run are incredibly instrumental in lifting marginalized and low-income students into the middle class.

We were really heartened to see the level of enthusiasm and support for this cohort-based model and we’re excited to expand the program so that we can introduce more students to the energy industry. Thank you.”



Celebrating the Colin Powell School’s Innovation Fellows





## CATALYST FOR CHANGE AWARD

Emily Schapira, President and CEO, Philadelphia Energy Authority



### A NOTE FROM SMART ENERGY DECISIONS:

This special Catalyst for Change Award is given to Emily Schapira, President and CEO, Philadelphia Energy Authority, by Smart Energy Decisions in recognition of her positive effect on SED itself. When Emily began advising SED on an event in Philadelphia in 2019, she encouraged us to address issues of diversity in energy. These are difficult issues to tackle but Emily remained a guiding force as SED developed its "Inspiring Diversity in Energy" series. We learned that these conversations don't always get easier but they do get more productive, as we see in the programs and efforts celebrated with the DEI Impact Awards. SED is proud to be part of these conversations and grateful to Emily Schapira for her counsel, her dedication, and her refusal to take "no" for an answer!

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The following is a letter from Emily Schapira to the attendees of the DEI Impact Awards celebration at the Net Zero Forum:

Friends and Colleagues,

I'm so grateful for the recognition of this Catalyst for Change award. We work hard at the Philadelphia Energy Authority to embed equity into every program and project we support, and to create a workforce and internal work environment that drives diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. In a moment in American workplace culture when DEI is alternately a buzzword and fodder for culture wars, it's on all of us to ensure that this work is not performative. It's all of our responsibility to not just say "Well, we tried", but to put in the work to make sure opportunities are accessible and feasible for all; that we can meet people where they are rather than assuming they'd find us; that we acknowledge and understand that there is still a lot to overcome.

Thank you to SED for always letting me speak frankly, for taking feedback seriously, and for coming back year after year better and better. Congratulations to all the incredible awardees here today.

With gratitude,

Emily Schapira  
President & CEO  
Philadelphia Energy Authority



Emily Schapira, President & CEO, Philadelphia Energy Authority



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEI  
IMPACT  
awards



### SMART ENERGY DECISIONS

Smart Energy Decisions is the first web-based information resource dedicated exclusively to addressing the information needs of large power customers from commercial, industrial, institutional (higher education and healthcare), and government organizations. We deliver news, analysis, research and opinion through our newsletters and events to help our community make better decisions. Our goal is to serve as a catalyst for change in support of the dramatic energy transformation taking place in the electric power market that impacts energy customers, utilities, and suppliers. Learn more at [smartenergydecisions.com](https://smartenergydecisions.com).



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# SAVE THE DATE

for Smart Energy Decisions' Upcoming Events



**NET ZERO FORUM FALL**  
Westminster, CO  
The Westin Westminster

**SEP 16-18  
2024**



**NET ZERO FORUM SPRING**  
Cedar Creek, TX  
Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa

**APR 22-24  
2025**



**RENEWABLE ENERGY FORUM**  
Hollywood, FL  
The Diplomat Beach Resort

**JUN 16-18  
2025**



## HAVE QUESTIONS?

Contact our team to get answers.



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# DEI **IMPACT** awards



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