

2026

AMAC ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & POLICY FORUM

MARCH
18-20
2026

📍 WASHINGTON, DC

PROGRAM GUIDE



amacforum.com



4TH ANNUAL AMAC
**AIRPORT
BUSINESS
CONFERENCE**
HOSTED BY BWI THURGOOD MARSHALL AIRPORT

**JUNE 10-14
2026**

National Harbor, MD

The **AMAC Airport Business Conference** connects **nearly 1,600** aviation professionals, businesses, government officials, and changemakers to explore the future of our industry through the lens of innovation, access, and opportunity. The conference remains a platform for advancing minority and women-owned businesses and their vital role in fueling local economies – connecting aviation to community growth while offering rich opportunities for advocacy, learning and networking.

This year's theme, **Progress Through Partnership: Reframe, Refocus, Rebuild**, reflects a call to action. As the policy landscape shifts, **AMAC remains anchored in its vision of creating economic access and increasing representation for minorities and women in the aviation and aerospace industries.** Together, we are evolving to meet the moment with fresh ideas and transformative strategies that benefit the entire industry. We'll reframe the narrative to champion growth, refocus our goals to drive greater impact and rebuild opportunities to create a stronger foundation for the next generation of aviation leaders.

Set at the National Harbor, only minutes away from our nation's capital, the 2026 conference offers a vibrant environment to spark new ideas and renew our collective mission.



amac-org.com/annualconference



SCAN FOR MORE
INFORMATION

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AMAC-AT-A-GLANCE

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Airport Industry Spotlight

- \$1.4T Economic Activity
- 11.5M Jobs
- 825M Passengers
- 7% U.S. GDP Contribution

Concessions Industry Spotlight

- \$12B Industry
- 600M Guests Served
- 100K Jobs
- \$1.7B Non-Aeronautical Revenue
- \$30B Annual Economic Impact
- \$10 Billion Attributed to Small Businesses

AMAC

Since 1984

The Airport Minority Advisory Council (AMAC) is the only national, non-profit trade association dedicated to advancing the full participation of minorities and women in employment and contracting opportunities throughout the aviation and aerospace industries.



CHAPTERS & REGIONS

- ACTIVE CHAPTERS
- CENTRAL
- EASTERN
- GREAT LAKES
- NORTHEAST
- NORTHWEST
- SOUTHEAST
- SOUTHWEST
- WESTERN



View Strategic Plans & Annual Reports

As of December 2025

- Airport Members**
 - 452 Members
 - 37 Major Hub Airports
- Business Members**
 - 439 Members
 - 378 Organizations
- Corporate Members**
 - 487 Members
 - 42 Corporations
- Individual Members**
 - 121 Members
- Student Members**
 - 20 Members



1,976
TOTAL MEMBERS

Top 5 Industries

- Food & Beverage
- Retail
- Construction
- Engineering
- Architecture

AMAC Foundation

Since 1997

The AMAC Foundation works alongside AMAC and is dedicated to advancing minorities and women pursuing careers in the aviation industry by developing educational programs and providing scholarships to students who are emerging aviation professionals.



\$457,900
Amount of Scholarships
Awarded Since 2013

AMAC PAC

Since 2018

The AMAC Political Action Committee (AMAC PAC) works to further AMAC's direct advocacy and educational initiatives on Capitol Hill by making monetary contributions to federal candidates and political action committees and caucuses that understand and support equity in airport contracting and employment. The AMAC PAC is non-partisan and provides our members with the means for concerted political action.



2026 AMAC ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & POLICY FORUM

WASHINGTON, DC | WASHINGTON MARRIOTT AT METRO CENTER

Dear AMAC Members and Stakeholders,

Welcome to the 2026 AMAC Economic Opportunity & Policy Forum. We are pleased to convene you at a critical moment for the aviation industry and for the small businesses that power the airport ecosystem.

As the U.S. policy landscape continues to evolve, airports, primes and small businesses are navigating increased scrutiny, regulatory shifts and uncertainty about the future of the DBE and ACDBE programs. These programs remain essential tools for ensuring access, fairness and opportunity in aviation-related contracting and concessions. At the same time, stakeholders must stay informed, agile and prepared to adapt as federal policy discussions shape how these programs are administered and defended.

This forum is designed to provide timely insights and real-world guidance on how these changes affect your business and your role in the industry. Participation puts you at the center of discussions on airport economic opportunities, DBE/ACDBE program updates, access to capital and practical strategies for small businesses to pivot and compete in today's changing market. AMAC members also get the exclusive opportunity to advocate directly with lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

Throughout the forum, you will hear from policymakers, industry leaders and subject matter experts who will share perspectives on legislative priorities, compliance considerations and strategies for strengthening and sustaining inclusive participation across aviation. Equally important, you will engage with peers who are confronting the same challenges and identifying solutions that move the industry forward.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing fairness, opportunity and innovation within aviation. We look forward to your participation and to a productive and impactful forum.

Warm regards,

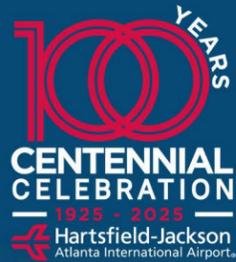


Ricky D. Smith
Chair, AMAC Board of Directors
General Manager, Hartsfield-Jackson
Atlanta International Airport



Eboni Wimbush
President & CEO, AMAC





Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) is proud to serve as a sponsor of the 2026 Airport Minority Advisory Council (AMAC) Economic Opportunity and Policy Forum. As the global gateway from the Southeast to the world—and the world’s busiest and most efficient airport—ATL recognizes that our role as an economic engine carries both significant responsibility and far-reaching impact.

With more than 108 million passengers annually, a \$66 billion economic impact, and a workforce of over 63,000 employees, ATL is uniquely positioned to expand access, drive economic participation, and strengthen pathways across the aviation ecosystem. The small businesses operating throughout our terminals, on our airfield, and within our supply chain are vital contributors—helping to power not only airport operations but also the broader regional economy.

As the aviation industry navigates evolving federal guidance and an increasingly complex policy landscape, ATL remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing meaningful business initiatives that support sustainable growth.

We look forward to engaging with Congressional leaders, Administration officials, and industry partners during Capitol Hill Day and throughout the Forum to advance policies that broaden access, strengthen participation, and foster long-term growth across aviation. We also extend our sincere appreciation for your continued leadership in shaping the future of our industry.

PROUD TO SUPPORT

the AMAC Economic Opportunity & Policy Forum

It is a privilege to support your mission to empower underrepresented entrepreneurs by creating opportunities for business ownership.

Across North America, we champion over 250 small business partners in over 75 airports.



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AGENDA

DAY 1 | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026

U.S. Capitol Visitor Center & Washington Marriott at Metro Center
Capitol Hill Day (Members Only)

8:00 am–8:10 am

Location: U.S. Capitol Visitor Center (Exterior)

U.S. Capitol Meet Up

Meet at Corner of East Capitol & First Street NE

8:30 am

Location: U.S. Capitol East Front Steps (Bottom)

AMAC Members Capitol Hill Group Photo

Group Photo: Meet at the bottom of the U.S. Capitol steps at 8:30 am, promptly, for a group photo. After, we will proceed through security and into the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center.

8:45 am

Location: U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Cannon HOB Room 330

Breakfast

9:00 am–9:05 am

Location: U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Cannon HOB Room 330

Opening Remarks

Speakers:

- **Ricky Smith**, Chair, AMAC Board of Directors; General Manager, Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport
- **Eboni Wimbush**, President & CEO, AMAC
- **Gonzalo de la Melena Jr.**, Vice Chair, AMAC Government Affairs Committee; Founder/CEO, Emerging Airport Ventures

9:05 am–9:25 am

Location: U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Cannon HOB Room 330

U.S. House of Representatives Committee Updates

Speakers:

- **Cate Benedetti**, Professional Staff Member, House Committee on Small Business, Democratic Staff
- **Lauren Dudley**, Democratic Staff Director, House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation

9:25 am–9:30 am

Location: U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Cannon HOB Room 330

Advocacy Prep Briefing

Speakers:

- **Andre Titus**, Senior Manager, Programs & Operations, AMAC
- **Nigel Stephens**, Founder & Principal, Phoenix Strategies

9:30 am–4:30 pm

Location: U.S. Capitol Complex (Various)

Capitol Connect: Direct Dialogue with Elected Officials

Speakers:

- Elected Officials
- Congressional Staffers

12:00 pm–1:00 pm

Location: U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Cannon HOB Room 330

Lunch

AGENDA

3:00 pm–6:00 pm

Location: Washington Marriott at Metro Center

Forum Registration Open

5:30 pm–7:30 pm

Location: Washington Marriott at Metro Center

AMAC PAC Reception – The Work Continues

Following a full day of advocacy, the AMAC Political Action Committee (AMAC PAC) invites members and forum registrants to gather for a brief but meaningful reception.

This is a critical moment for our industry and our collective voice. The AMAC PAC works to advance AMAC's advocacy efforts by supporting federal leaders and caucuses who understand and champion fair access to airport contracting and employment opportunities. As the landscape continues to evolve, member presence and engagement are essential.

This reception is not a conclusion—it is a moment to come together, reinforce shared priorities and carry momentum forward as the forum begins and our work continues.

The AMAC PAC is non-partisan and provides members with a coordinated platform for political action.

Register: [AMACPACMarch2026.eventbrite.com](https://amacpacmarch2026.eventbrite.com)



AGENDA

DAY 2 | THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026

Washington Marriott at Metro Center

7:00 am–5:00 pm **Registration Open**

7:30 am–8:30 am **Rise n' Shine Breakfast**

Sponsored by  

8:45 am–9:00 am **Opening Remarks**

Speakers:

- **Ricky Smith**, Chair, AMAC Board of Directors; General Manager, Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport
- **Eboni Wimbush**, President & CEO, AMAC
- **Farad Ali**, Chair, AMAC Government Affairs Committee; Executive Chairman, Asociar

9:00 am–9:30 am **Opening Keynote Address**

Speaker:

- **Senator Cory Booker**, U.S. Senate (D-NJ)

9:40 am–10:40 am **From City Hall to the Runway**

As airports expand and modernize, ensuring local small businesses benefit from these investments is more important than ever. From construction and concessions to services and supply chains, airport development can drive meaningful local economic impact when small businesses are intentionally included.

This panel will feature mayors discussing how they are leveraging airport projects to increase small business participation and growth. The conversation will highlight policies, partnerships and procurement strategies that create access to contracts, build capacity and support long-term success within the airport ecosystem.

Panelists will also share how these efforts align with broader city goals such as workforce development, neighborhood revitalization and sustained economic opportunity.

Moderator:

- **Stephanie Gidigbi Jenkins**, Co-Director, Communities First Fund

Panel:

- **Mayor Van Johnson**, Savannah, GA
- **Mayor Steven Reed**, Montgomery, AL

AGENDA

DAY 2 | THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026

Washington Marriott at Metro Center

11:00 am–11:45 am **From IFR to Implementation**

This session moves beyond “what the IFR says” and focuses on what is shaping the DBE environment right now. Panelists will cover the current legal framework, varying UCP re-evaluation progress, state actions, policy shifts and how airports and agencies are operationalizing compliance while preserving opportunity. We will also address race-neutral small-business participation approaches, what can be done within existing approved plans and emerging questions around existing contracts, counting, good-faith efforts and substitution as certifications change. Attendees will leave with clarity on what is stabilizing, what remains uncertain and how to plan responsibly over the next 60–90 days.

Moderator:

- **Irene Marion**, President, IBM Consulting

Panel:

- **Subash Iyer**, Partner, Kaplan Kirsch
- **Sarah von der Lippe**, Pro-bono Chief Legal Counsel, Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc.

12:00 pm–1:00 pm **Networking Lunch**

1:15 pm–2:15 pm **Pathways to Participation: How Airports Are Transforming Business Engagement**

This session explores how airports and primes are taking intentional action to expand opportunities and improve participation across airport programs. Panelists will share real-world approaches to forecasting upcoming work, strengthening outreach, promoting open opportunities in procurement and evaluation practices and creating clearer pathways for business engagement. Attendees will gain insight into how airports are expanding access, improving transparency and positioning firms to engage early, track opportunities and compete more effectively.

Moderator

- **Justina Mann**, Chair, AMAC Chapters Development Committee; President & Managing Principal, Blue Ink Group

Panel:

- **Leticia Caviness**, Assistant General Manager, Business Engagement, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport
- **Amber Meshack**, Director, Business, Jobs & Social Responsibility Division, Los Angeles World Airports
- **Shawn Smith**, Senior Vice President, Culture & Strategy, Denver International Airport

AGENDA

DAY 2 | THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026

Washington Marriott at Metro Center

2:15 pm–2:45 pm Federal Access in Action: A Conversation with USDOT OSDBU

A formal discussion with Allen Gutierrez, Director of the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). Director Gutierrez will provide an overview of OSDBU's latest programs and resources designed to expand federal contracting opportunities for small businesses. He will also outline the Office's technical assistance initiatives aimed at strengthening small business capacity and long-term competitiveness. Additionally, the discussion will address OSDBU's partnership with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and its role in enhancing access and engagement for firms participating in aviation-related projects and contracts.

Moderator:

- **Gonzalo de la Melena Jr.**, Vice Chair, AMAC Government Affairs Committee; Founder/CEO, Emerging Airport Ventures

Speaker:

- **Allen Gutierrez**, Director, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, U.S. Department of Transportation

3:00 pm–4:00 pm Competing Smarter, Not Harder, in Uncertain Times

Airports are moving major projects forward, but small businesses are facing tougher conditions. Tariffs, rising operating costs, tighter margins and shifting procurement and operating requirements are changing what it takes to compete and perform. Panelists will share practical ways to rethink pricing, partnerships and capacity, manage tariff and cash flow risk and align with airport approaches without overextending. Attendees will leave with strategies that help firms stay competitive and help airports and primes build stronger, more sustainable participation.

Moderator:

- **Nia Newton**, Deputy Chief, Business Development & Management, Maryland Aviation Administration

Panel:

- **Huy Pham**, Founder & CEO, Phamtastic Concessions
- **Nicholas Schaefer**, Executive Vice President, SSP America

4:00 pm–4:45 pm Capital to Compete

For many small businesses, the barrier to airport work is not capability; it is cash. This session features financial institution leaders discussing how the lending landscape is evolving to serve small businesses pursuing entry, growth and stability in aviation. Panelists will share how lenders are adapting their platforms, underwriting and partnerships for aviation contracting; what they need to see to lend with confidence; and how firms can strengthen financials, documentation and project readiness to become capital-ready. Attendees will gain a clearer view of how lenders assess risk in this sector and the steps businesses can take to access responsible, sustainable funding.

Moderator:

- **Brett Kelly**, Vice President, Development, HMSHost by Avolta

Panel:

- **Howard Cloy**, Chief Risk Officer/Regulatory Compliance, Liberty Bank & Trust Company
- **Tony Thomas**, Managing Director, Harbor Bankshares Capital Corporation

5:00 pm–6:00 pm Circle of Influence Networking Reception

AGENDA

DAY 3 | FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2026

Washington Marriott at Metro Center

8:00 am–9:00 am Rise n' Shine Breakfast

Sponsored by  

9:00 am–10:30 am Airport Opportunities Procurement Forecast

Airport representatives will present a 12–18 month procurement forecast outlining architecture, engineering, construction and concession opportunities for suppliers.

Speakers:

- **Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA)** – Bernie Williams, Chief Strategy Officer, Acting Deputy Commissioner
- **Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA)** – Amber Meshack, Director, Business, Jobs & Social Responsibility Division
- **Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA)** – Monica Queen, Acting Deputy Director, Procurement Manager
- **Ontario International Airport (ONT)** – Isela Toledo, Director, Business Opportunities
- **Philadelphia International Airport (PHL)** – Deatrice Isaac, Vice President, Airport Procurement
- **Wayne County Airport Authority (WCAA)** – Michael Jackson II, Senior Vice President, Planning & Construction, Economic Development, Concessions & Environmental Services

11:00 am–1:00 pm Business Matchmaking

This appointment-only session connects airports and prime contractors directly with suppliers for focused, high-value conversations designed to spark partnerships and business opportunities.

Buyers:

- **Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA)** – Bernie Williams, Chief Strategy Officer, Acting Deputy Commissioner
- **Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA)** – Amber Meshack, Director, Business, Jobs & Social Responsibility Division
- **Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA)** – Monica Queen, Acting Deputy Director, Procurement Manager
- **Ontario International Airport (ONT)** – Isela Toledo, Director, Business Opportunities
- **Philadelphia International Airport (PHL)** – Deatrice Isaac, Vice President, Airport Procurement
- **Wayne County Airport Authority (WCAA)** – Michael Jackson II, Senior Vice President, Planning & Construction, Economic Development, Concessions & Environmental Services

1:00 pm Forum Concludes



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JUNE 10-14, 2026 National Harbor, MD



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S&C Robinson Enterprise



RISE N' SHINE BREAKFAST



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SPEAKERS

AMAC LEADERSHIP



Ricky D. Smith
Chair, AMAC Board of Directors; General Manager, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport



Eboni Wimbush
President & CEO, AMAC



Farad Ali
Chair, AMAC Government Affairs Committee; Executive Chairman, Asociar



Justina Mann
Chair, AMAC Chapters Development Committee; President & Managing Principal, Blue Ink Group



Gonzalo de la Melena Jr.
Vice Chair, AMAC Government Affairs Committee; Founder/CEO, Emerging Airport Ventures

KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Senator Cory Booker
U.S. Senate (D-NJ)



Allen Gutierrez
Director, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, U.S. Department of Transportation



Mayor Van Johnson
Savannah, GA



Mayor Steven Reed
Montgomery, AL

VIP SPEAKERS



Cate Benedetti
Professional Staff Member, House Committee on Small Business, Democratic Staff



Derek Brown
Vice President, Construction Executive, Mid-Atlantic, Turner Construction



Leticia Caviness
Assistant General Manager, Business Engagement, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport



Howard Cloy
Chief Risk Officer/Regulatory Compliance, Liberty Bank and Trust Company

PANELS & PRESENTATIONS

SPEAKERS



Lauren Dudley
Democratic Staff Director, House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation



Stephanie Gidigbi Jenkins
Co-Director, Communities First Fund



Deatrice Isaac
Vice President, Airport Procurement, Philadelphia International Airport



Subash Iyer
Partner, Kaplan Kirsch LLP



Brett Kelly
Vice President, Development, HMSHost by Avolta



Michael Jackson II
Senior Vice President, Planning & Construction, Economic Development & Environmental Services, Wayne County Airport Authority



Irene Marion
President, IBM Consulting



Amber Meshack
Director, Business, Jobs & Social Responsibility, Los Angeles World Airports



Nia Newton
Deputy Chief, Business Development & Management, Maryland Aviation Administration



Tia Perry
Vice President, Strategic Partnerships & Membership, AMAC



Huy Pham
Founder & CEO, Phamstastic Concessions



Monica Queen
Acting Deputy Director, Procurement Manager, Baltimore/Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport & Martin State Airport



Nicholas Schaefer
Executive Vice President, SSP America



Shawn Smith
Senior Vice President, Culture & Strategy, Denver International Airport



Nigel Stephens
Principal, Phoenix Strategies



Tony Thomas
Managing Director, Harbor Bankshares Capital Corporation

SPEAKERS



Andre Titus

Senior Manager, Programs & Operations,
AMAC



Isela Toledo

Director, Business Opportunities,
Ontario International Airport



Sarah von der Lippe

Pro-bono Chief Legal Counsel, Minority
Business Enterprise Legal Defense and
Education Fund, Inc.



Bernie Williams

Chief Strategy Officer, Acting Deputy
Commissioner, Chicago Department of
Aviation

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President, Pastorelle Marketing Group



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Justina Mann
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George Mboya
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Gonzalo de la Melena, Jr.
Founder & CEO, Emerging Airport Ventures



Dwight H. Pullen, Jr.
Senior Vice President, Global Aviation Americas Leader, AECOM



Simeon Terry
Vice President, Diversity Affairs, Austin Commercial

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Farad Ali
Executive Chairman, Asociar

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Eboni Wimbush
 President & CEO



Jeanette Saunders
 Vice President, Education & Advisory Services



Tia Perry
 Vice President, Strategic Partnerships & Membership



Ramon Lo
 Director, Membership & Industry Engagement



Andre Titus
 Senior Manager, Programs & Operations



Ashley Clough
 Operations Support



Hadiya Culbreath
 Program Support Specialist

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 AMAC Foundation: **Sunshine White**
 AMAC PAC: **Nicholas Crews**, Crews Hospitality

AMAC National Office

President & CEO: Eboni Wimbush, AMAC
Danielle Allen, AMAC
Shahara Anderson-Davis, 3D Vision
Ashley Clough, AMAC
Hadiya Culbreath, AMAC
Mareco Edwards, South River Law
Jovan Goldstein, JGoldstein
Ramon Lo, AMAC
Tia Perry, AMAC
Jennifer Reighley, AMAC
Jeanette Saunders, AMAC
Erik Sams, Genoasboy Studio
Andre Titus, AMAC

AMAC National Office Event Management Team

Kyle Hutchinson, Hutchinson Design Group
John Parker, Hutchinson Design Group
Geoffrey Seiler, Hutchinson Design Group

AMAC PAC Reception

Nicholas Crews, Crews Hospitality
Yvette Drake, Unison Consulting
Kimberly Griffin, DBE Consulting LLC

Content Planning

Farad Ali, Asociar
Patrick Askew, McKissack & McKissack
Denise Bailey, Bailey White Solutions
Paul Brown, Fraport USA
Thiane Carter, Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority
Karen Ellis, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport
Nigel Stephens, Phoenix Strategies, Inc.
Greg Willis, Phoenix Strategies, Inc.

Corporate Development

Tonja Pastorelle, Pastorelle Marketing Group

Elected Officials

Nick Crews, Crews Hospitality



Ballard Associates LLC is proud to serve as **Champion Sponsor** of the **Airport Minority Advisory Council's Economic Opportunity & Policy Forum** in Washington, DC.

This gathering unites aviation leaders, policymakers, small businesses, and stakeholders to address economic opportunities, legislative priorities, and diversity in aviation. The Forum helps shape policies that expand access and promote small business participation.

Ballard Associates LLC, a management consulting and airport concessions firm, fully supports AMAC's efforts for expanding equity and opportunity for DBE and ACDBE participants, while opening doors and **building a stronger, more inclusive aviation industry.**

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AMAC PAC Board



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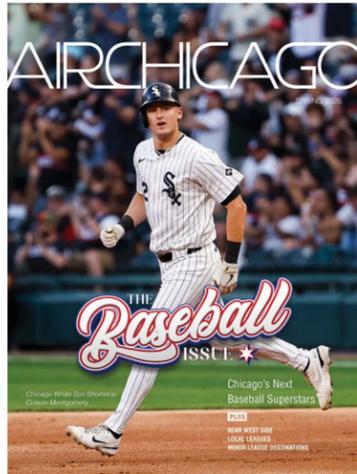
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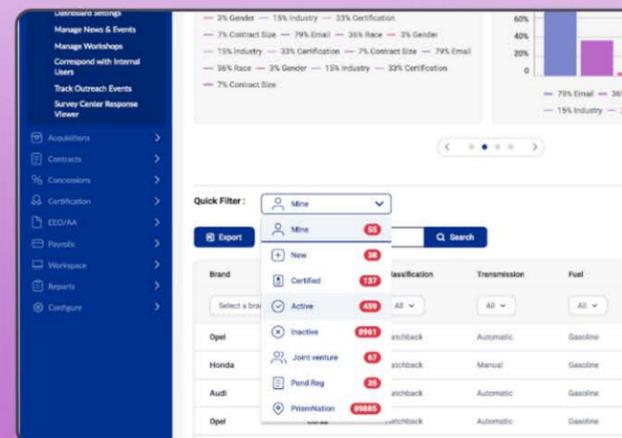


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