



## TOWARD GREATER REPRESENTATION AND EQUITY IN TECH

# Solutions from Women of Color from Underrepresented Groups

*Women of color are severely underrepresented in technical roles – especially those who identify as Black, Hispanic/Latina, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander.* At AnitaB.org, we believe strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion practices foster a sense of belonging for women of color from underrepresented groups. AnitaB.org produces Grace Hopper Celebration, the world’s largest gathering of women technologists. The annual event has grown to more than 20,500 attendees in the U.S. and more than 3,500 attendees in India.

**NOTE**  
The case study is not a complete representation of the experiences and thoughts of women of color from underrepresented groups. More than half of the women involved in the study were students or were in transition. The vast majority (79%) were early in their tech career with less than five (5) years of work experience in tech.

PROGRAM FUNDING  
GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY:



### OUR INITIATIVE

To increase access to Grace Hopper Celebration, AnitaB.org piloted a program to offer complimentary registrations to women of color from underrepresented racial or ethnic groups.

A pre- and post-survey were administered to over 700 women who attended in order to understand more about the challenges they face and what they need to stay in the field. Our findings contain their direct and unfiltered insights, which are critical to designing solutions that center around the needs of women of color from underrepresented groups.

We hope that these insights can be used by both organizations and conference planners to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, which in turn will foster a sense of belonging for women of color from underrepresented groups.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Application and survey data from women technologists of color in underrepresented groups revealed four key needs:**

*connections with other women in tech*

*opportunities to develop and advance professionally*

*mentors and sponsors who provide guidance*

*financial support for professional advancement*

### BRIGHT SPOT



*Despite the challenges experienced by women of color from underrepresented groups, almost 90% of the women stated they are energized and excited about a career in tech. For companies, this is an opportunity to learn how to better attract and support these women.*



## BEFORE & AFTER GHC: A CLOSER LOOK

How do women of color from underrepresented groups feel about pursuing careers in technology? What are their needs and concerns? Could these be improved by attending an event designed to help them feel like they belong? We captured data before and after the 2018 Grace Hopper Celebration (GHC) and discovered four major themes.

### connections

Women of color from underrepresented groups are seeking a greater sense of connection and community.

Feel isolated in their area of study/work



Feel like part of a larger community of women technologists



Have a strong network of women of color from underrepresented groups



Respondents described what connection means to them:

“Creating spaces exclusive to women of color where we can be transparent is a great start.”

### mentorship and sponsorship

Women of color from underrepresented groups desire mentors, guidance, and sponsorship to help them navigate a career in tech.



Believe they have multiple role models to look up to



Know the next step in their career and have a plan



### opportunities

Women of color from underrepresented groups are looking for opportunities to both enter the technical field and advance in their careers.



What women of color from underrepresented groups want:

- Fellowships and internships
- More technical conferences closer to their communities throughout the year
- Education and training leading to technical certifications
- Leadership development

Support systems are important, too:

- Support for job preparation, including salary negotiations, interviewing, and overcoming imposter syndrome.
- Peer support and collaboration. This could take the form of a group that meets periodically to work on job/career strategy, resumes, presentation skills, and confidence building.

### financial support

Women of color from underrepresented groups want to maximize their career potential in tech – but often find that financial limitations become a barrier to advancement. Our own initiative demonstrated the validity of this finding.



of women offered complimentary registration to GHC declined to go due to the cost of out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, hotel, and meals.

“Advancing one’s career when working at a company that does not pay for professional development can be an insurmountable challenge for [a] woman being paid less than her male counterparts.”

## ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

### FOR COMPANIES:



**Create networking opportunities.** Provide time, space, and resources for women to connect via employee resource groups and other affinity groups, internally or externally.



**Encourage and support professional development opportunities.** Provide opportunities and support the opportunities women find on their own.



**Provide financial support.** Sponsor women who want to attend conferences or gain technical skills. Remember that there are significant costs beyond registration. If possible, provide financial assistance for travel, accommodations, and food.



**Establish formal mentorship and sponsorship programs.**



**Train recruiters and set goals.** Make it a priority to interview and consider women of color from underrepresented groups (including those from training programs & non-traditional pathways) for opportunities that also include apprenticeships.

### FOR EVENT ORGANIZERS:



**Apply a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens** at all stages of conference planning to ensure a sense of belonging for all attendees.



**Implement multi-tiered access points to make attendance more accessible.** This may include scholarships, discount prices, and seeking additional partners to sponsor opportunities for women of color from underrepresented groups to attend your event.



**Ensure that there are multiple opportunities** for women of color from underrepresented groups to connect.



**Actively engage with women of color from underrepresented groups** to understand and meet their needs.



**Connect women of color from underrepresented groups with job opportunities.** This requires vetting companies to ensure that they have inclusive and equitable hiring practices.

## TERMS USED

### Underrepresented minorities (URMs)<sup>1</sup>:

Blacks/African Americans, Hispanics/Latinx, American Indians, Alaska Natives

### Underrepresented groups (URGs):

URMs + Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders

### Women of color (WOC):

URMs + URGs + women of Asian, Middle Eastern or North African descent

**DEI:** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

1. Based on the National Science Foundation definition <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17310/digest/introduction/>



### LEARN MORE >

For more information on how AnitaB.org helps organizations with their diversity efforts, and how these insights can inform your DEI programs and conference planning, contact us at: [OrgTransformation@AnitaB.org](mailto:OrgTransformation@AnitaB.org).

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