



Office of the City Manager

August 27, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: *Dee* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Subject: Berkeley Ventures, Berkeley Values Initiative Update

This memo provides a summary of the Berkeley Ventures, Berkeley Values initiative which has two distinct goals: 1) inspiring Berkeley's innovation businesses to give back to the local community, and 2) educating & training employers to create more diverse teams and inclusive workplaces.

Background

Berkeley has over 350 "innovation sector" companies, of which the vast majority are early stage technology or life science industry startups. These companies are vital to the Berkeley economy as they create local jobs and attract capital, and many are leading the way in developing scalable high impact solutions that improve health, well-being, and the environment. For example, an 'innovation sector' company might develop a new treatment for a life-threatening disease, produce renewable energy technology, or create plant-based alternatives to traditional meat and dairy.

The technology industry generally has been criticized for its lack of workforce diversity, especially in top leadership roles. At the same time, early stage innovation-focused startups that rely on venture investment and intend to scale new technologies globally or nationally are perceived as contributing less to their immediate community than local-serving, family-owned businesses. These trends likely contribute to the "techlash" being experienced in cities nationwide as communities witness disparities within – and connected to – the technology industry, despite the overall economic benefits these companies bring to their host cities.

To buck this trend, the [Berkeley Startup Cluster](#) (BSC), a partnership between the City of Berkeley, UC Berkeley, Berkeley Lab, Berkeley Chamber, and Downtown Berkeley Association with a shared mission to "*make Berkeley a more vibrant, accessible and equitable place for startups to launch and grow*", launched the Berkeley Ventures, Berkeley Values (BV²) initiative in August 2019. The BSC partners joined forces to educate local leaders in the innovation sector about the ways they could build a diverse workforce, create inclusive workspaces and "give-back" to create a more equitable Berkeley economy.

The BSC is financially supported with resources from the City of Berkeley, a grant from the UC Berkeley Chancellor's Community Partnership Fund, and the 18 BV² project partners (see Attachment I for a complete list). The BSC is led by staff from the City of Berkeley Office of Economic Development, with oversight from the BSC [Steering Committee](#) and [Advisory Group](#).

Key Activities Undertaken

In its first two years, BV² educated more than 300 supporters of Berkeley's innovation ecosystem on a range of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) topics relevant to startups, engaged 95 local companies, and showed nearly 100 Berkeley High School students (including many from racial and cultural backgrounds that are underrepresented in the tech industry) how their science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills could be applied to careers in local innovation industries.

In its first 6 months (from September 2019 until March 2020), BV²:

- Educated local startup founders *in-person* on topics such as “what it means to be a woman in tech in today’s world”, the Berkeley Lab’s IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and accountability) framework, how to “Get VCs to take you seriously as a female founder”, and “Supporting Inclusion Innovation in Berkeley” by organizing five workshops and lunch discussions at the UC Berkeley SkyDeck and CITRIS Foundry accelerators.
- Partnered with the regional non-profit, TechEquity Collaborative, to organize a Berkeley edition of their IGNITES! workshop series where seven Berkeley business leaders shared their ideas, pecha-kucha¹ style, on “Tech & the Future of Berkeley” with 45 Berkeley residents, workers, and innovation ecosystem supporters.
- Collaborated with the Cal State University-East Bay Institute for STEM Education and Berkeley Unified School District to host five “STEM CareerX Days” for more than 65 Berkeley High School students to engage in hands-on STEM and career mapping activities supported by tech industry professionals to explore how their STEM education could transpire into real-world careers (tours were hosted at Bayer, Magoosh, SkyDeck, Cambridge Quantum Computing, and Eko Devices).
- Worked with the Berkeley Chamber to update the winner selection criteria for the 2019 Visionary Awards to consider founders’ DEI commitments -- and recognize them for such at the September 2019 ceremony.

¹ Translated from the Japanese words for ‘chit-chat’, Pecha-Kucha, is a presentation format using 20 slides where presenters are allotted 20 seconds of commentary per slide.

- Created a new [“Give Back” page](#) on the Berkeley Startup Cluster website to enable business leaders to easily identify opportunities to contribute to Berkeley non-profits and educational organizations, given their specific interests and time constraints.
- Participated in other events with a focus on diversity in technology industry leadership, such as “Turning Tech to Traction: Meet CITRIS Foundry & Cyclotron Road” and Women in Technology Initiative (WITI@UC) Leadership Roundtables.

After Shelter in Place orders were issued in March 2020, BV² had to rethink its programming. Instead of in-person activities, BV² undertook the following:

- Hosted two “virtual career exploration opportunities” with the Berkeley Unified School District Career Advisor where the leaders of Berkeley companies, Codi and Arris Composites, provided ~30 Berkeley High School students with a business overview, shared their career paths and answered questions.
- Held a webinar with TechEquity Collaborative (“[Developing Talent: Berkeley’s Workforce Post COVID-19](#)”) featuring the Berkeley Lab’s Faith Dukes, Berkeley SkyDeck’s Caroline Winnett, and City of Berkeley Office of Economic Development’s Elizabeth Redman Cleveland, with additional context and insights on mechanisms to support a more equitable economy from the Kapor Center’s Lili Gangas.
- Developed a first-of-its-kind [BV² Learning Lab & Pitch Competition event series](#) which included:
 - A kick-off webinar on [Startups Innovating A More Equitable Future](#) moderated by Jill Finlayson, Director of the EDGE in Tech Initiative at UC Berkeley and featuring leading DEI experts Lili Gangas (Chief Technology Community Officer at the Kapor Center), Lawrence Humphrey (Co-founder and Executive Director of Tech Can [Do] Better), Y-Vonne Hutchinson (CEO of ReadySet) and Antonia Ford (Diversity and Belonging Partner at Blend).
 - A five-week long Learning Lab that engaged 14 Berkeley innovation companies wishing to learn new ways to support DEI and numerous training workshops and 1-1 coaching sessions by TechEquity Collaborative, Bias Busters at UC Berkeley, Berkeley SkyDeck Advisors, the co-founders of DealEngine.AI, the CEO and Founder of Magoosh, and Pure Ambition, Shine Diversity, and HireReach consultants. (Participating Berkeley companies included: Launchparty, STEM Redefined, Belli Meats, Geopogo, RePicture, Kapalya, 1Page, Kiwibot, Chinook Therapeutics,

Root Applied Sciences, Opus 12, Wild Earth, Clarity Movement, Makers Paradise).

- A culminating [BV² Pitch Competition](#) in June 2021, opened by Mayor Arreguín, featuring seven Berkeley startups, and judged by equity and inclusion changemakers: Lady Idos (Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer at Berkeley Lab), Mariah Lichtenstern (Founding Partner of DiverseCity Ventures), Jennifer Mangold (Director of the Fung Fellowship at UC Berkeley), Lucia Hicks Williams (Chief Operating Officer at AnitaB.org), and Kal Deutsch (CEO of DealEngine). (*The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place + Audience Choice winners were Launchparty, STEM Redefined, Belli Meats, and Geopogo, respectively.*)
- Participated in SkyDeck's DEI Committee to help Haas Equity Gender and Leadership (EGAL) Institute students to create SkyDeck programming and curriculum to coach startups on how to develop inclusive cultures.
- Developed and distributed a [BV² Survey](#) to identify/match innovation industry leaders with relevant opportunities to contribute to the community.
- Presented to the [2021 Cohort of Activate fellows](#) on the ways to engage locally while participating in the Berkeley Lab-based fellowship program, including the recommendation that they visit berkeleystartupcluster.com/giveback to find the best-fit opportunity for their team.

Berkeley Ventures, Berkeley Values Initiative Outcomes

BV² program participants offered the following unsolicited feedback:

"Thank you so much for the opportunity to be part of the BV² program and community. This program was absolutely packed with value, and it's also been great to connect with other entrepreneurs who are making DEI central to their work." – Aelisa Carr, Co-Founder of RePicture, BV² Pitch Competition contestant, and Berkeley resident

"As a UC Berkeley student myself, an aspiring Entrepreneur, and an intern at Geopogo, it has been lovely to learn from you all. It is especially empowering to collaborate with intellectuals in such integrative, innovative ways— all for the sake of approaching problems and solutions — as a community." – Saara Tayani, Geopogo & SkyDeck intern, BV² Pitch Competition contestant

"After seeing what I wrote a few months ago and where we are right now, I am sure we are on the right journey [...I have] a sense of satisfaction that it was all worth it, spending those late nights to be there for all those meetings, learning different perspectives and tools do help us do the right thing. Thanks for all the training and support :)" -- Pooran Prasad Rajanna, Founder of 1Page.com, BV² Pitch Competition contestant

In its first two years, Berkeley Ventures, Berkeley Values has led to a number of successful outcomes, including:

- Berkeley startup founders and other innovation ecosystem leaders have increased access to information, tools and resources to broaden and deepen their support for DEI and strengthened their community connections.
- Local non-profit organizations and educational institutions have developed new relationships with innovation industry leaders (e.g. TechEquity Collaborative has connected with Berkeley venture capital funds and accelerators such as The House Fund, Activate, SkyDeck, and Silicon Valley in Your Pocket to “mobilize tech workers to create an economy in the Bay Area that generates widespread prosperity and works for everyone”; and Berkeley High School career counselors have developed new relationships with local employers).
- Berkeley High School students have learned about potential career paths in innovation industries and how their classroom-based STEM education will lead to local and high-quality job opportunities.
- The City of Berkeley’s Office of Economic Development (OED) has established wider and more extensive relationships with local entrepreneurs and innovation industry leaders on topics related to DEI, talent recruitment, business licenses, and business expansion generally.
- The City of Berkeley has gained community recognition for its leadership on DEI issues through the:
 - Sept. 2019 [press release](#) issued in collaboration with SkyDeck that shared the BV² initiative’s goals.
 - June 16, 2021 *Berkeleyside* article, “[On June 23, Berkeley startups will pitch their ideas for supporting equity, inclusion and diversity](#)”.
 - July 19, 2021 Discovered in Berkeley sponsored story in *Berkeleyside*, “[What do delivery bots, faux pork and crowdfunding platforms have in common?](#)”
 - Monthly [Berkeley Startup Cluster newsletter](#), which has more than 4,800 subscribers.
 - Berkeley Startup Cluster [Twitter channel](#) (with nearly 2,900 followers).
 - BV² Learning Lab and Pitch Competition [LinkedIn page](#).
 - Various OED communications, such as a printed double-sided handout about the initiative, a presentation on “5 Things Every Berkeley Startup Should Know” for founders in local startup accelerators, and the [OED newsletter](#).

Next Steps

Throughout Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, BV² will continue to promote information and online resources to support DEI in innovation industries through the BSC newsletter, social media, and other direct communications with local innovation ecosystem leaders. After meeting with the BSC Steering Committee, OED will determine if there are additional ways to support an equitable economic recovery for our community through BV².

If you have any questions or feedback regarding the *Berkeley Ventures, Berkeley Values* initiative, please contact Eleanor Hollander, Acting Economic Development Manager, and Elizabeth Redman Cleveland, Chief Strategist, Sustainable Growth.

Attachment 1: BV² Project Partners

cc: Paul Buddenhagen, Deputy City Manager
David White, Deputy City Manager
Jenny Wong, City Auditor
Mark Numainville, City Clerk
Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager
Eleanor Hollander, Acting Economic Development Manager

BV² Project Partners

<i>Business/ University Partners</i>
<p>The Berkeley Chamber of Commerce is a private, not-for-profit organization established in 1900 to support business in Berkeley. It supports its business members and the economy of Berkeley by providing education, advocacy, and connections that position members for greater success and growth.</p>
<p>CITRIS Foundry has operated one of the pioneering accelerator programs for technology entrepreneurs launching their first startup since 2013. In addition to learning the financial aspects of commercializing a new technology, these founders also learn vital leadership, management, recruitment, and retention skills.</p>
<p>Activate (formerly Cyclotron Road) is a fellowship program at Berkeley Lab that supports leading entrepreneurial scientists as they advance technology projects with the potential for global impact.</p>
<p>The Downtown Berkeley Association (DBA) is an independent nonprofit organization, funded by Downtown Property Owners and other sources, focused on creating a welcoming, vibrant and prosperous City Center. Originally formed in 1989, the DBA is Owner's Association for the Downtown Berkeley Property-Based Business Improvement District (PBID), representing property owners and their merchant and business tenants.</p>
<p>The Haas Center for Equity, Gender, and Leadership (EGAL) educates equity fluent leaders to ignite and accelerate change.</p>
<p>The Berkeley-Haas Entrepreneurship Program includes the NSF I-Corps Bay Area Node and the UC LAUNCH Accelerator. Free and open to teams/startups with STEM innovations, the NSF I-Corps program offers a monthly introduction to the Lean Startup methodology via trainings for 10-12 teams each month with members including faculty, students, staff and community members. In addition, the UC-wide LAUNCH accelerator offers 3-month, free/no equity program that trains teams/startups in scaling the commercialization of their products. The program is open to anyone with a UC-affiliation.</p>
<p>Founded in 1931, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's (Berkeley Lab) mission is to enable transformational solutions for the nation's energy and environmental challenges, as well as train the next generation of scientists and engineers.</p>

Berkeley SkyDeck was formed as a partnership between the UC Berkeley Haas School of Business, College of Engineering, and Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research. With a mission to provide UC Berkeley startups with access to the tools and resources essential to cultivating their vision and growing their businesses, SkyDeck combines the consulting know-how of traditional startup accelerators with the vast resources of UC Berkeley and provides work spaces for cohort teams of startups, hot-desks for other promising tech entrepreneurs, and a large event space, often used to bring the community together with tech industry leaders.

The **Expanding Diversity and Gender Equity in Tech Initiative at the University of California (EDGE in Tech)**, formerly known as the Women in Technology Initiative at UC Berkeley (WITI@UC), is committed to addressing the challenges faced by women and other under-included identities in engineering and computer science fields by serving as a trusted center and resource that integrates research with action.

Community-based organizations and Education partners

Berkeley Unified School District enrolls more than 10,000 students in K-12, with nearly 40% qualifying as low-income or otherwise underserved as English Language Learners or foster youth. Through its **Career & Technical Education (CTE) Program**, it provides meaningful Work Based Learning opportunities career pathways for students and families. The Berkeley High **BRIDGE Program** assists kids from primarily from African American, Latino, and low-income families that are usually first-in-their-family to be college bound – to get into college and secure scholarships for higher education.

Dual designated as a “Minority Serving Institution”, **Berkeley Community College** serves 6700+ students, of which 54% are female, 16% are African American over 25% are Hispanic, 22%+ are AAPI. The majority of students transfer to CSU and UC degree programs.

The **Berkeley Community Fund** helps motivated and promising Berkeley youth from lower-income families, mostly first generation in their families, to attend college.

The **Berkeley Public Schools Fund** serves all of Berkeley public schools, pre-K to 12th grade through teacher grants and volunteers. The Schools Fund is an integral component of Berkeley public schools, providing grants to over half of the teachers in the District every year, with a unique perspective on unmet needs and services in the schools.

The Institute for STEM Education at Cal State University- East Bay serves the most diverse four-year college student body in the nation, with more than 16,000 students coming primarily from Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. More than 60% are the first in their family to attend college. The Institute for STEM Education's Career Awareness and Preparation Program (CAPP) prepares CSU East Bay students for careers by working with companies to achieve the goal of a diverse talent pipeline.

Founded in 1993, **Biotech Partners**, a 501(c)3 organization, provides a comprehensive, career technical education in Berkeley, Oakland, Antioch and San Marin public high schools and Peralta Community College District. Biotech Partners' mission is to provide low-income and underserved youth (specifically, young people of color, females and low-income students) with personal, academic and professional development experiences that increase participation in higher education and access to fulfilling science careers. Their curriculum includes a 2-year Biotech Academy within the public high schools, continued training at the Community College level, and paid 6-8 week summer internships with industry, academia, government labs, and medical institutions.

Subject matter experts/thought partners

TechEquity Collaborative activates the civic power of the tech industry's workers and companies, to ensure that as the region's tech-driven economy grows, and more people benefit from that growth. TechEquity started in 2017 by hosting talks in Oakland and San Francisco to deepen the region's collective understanding of key equitable growth issues.