

Institute for Innovations

Tampa, Florida - Wilmington, North Carolina

100 Black Men of America Virtual Think Tank

Purpose

This purpose of this proposal is to present an Internet-based Virtual Think Tank (VTT) as a part of the 100 Black Men of America Leadership Development Institute. This VTT will explore new ideas that can improve the lives of African Americans, particularly related to the “Four for the Future” mission in: Economic Development, Mentoring, Education and Health.

Need

The need for such a collaborative and perpetual brainstorming effort is apparent, if not critical. Being one of the premier organizations in the world dedicated to the improvement of the lives of persons of African descent, the 100 has the moral imperative to be the vanguard of leadership development in our communities. True leadership can not exist without vision and innovative ideas suited for meaningful participation in a hypercompetitive global economy. Old paradigms of the post-civil rights era can not provide the necessary vision for the future of the African Diaspora. Most discussions of the future of the global economy ignore any worthy contribution from our world wide community.

Program Description

In order to provide a forum and a systematic approach to generating a futuristic agenda the Institute for Innovation proposes a collaborative effort with 100 Black Men to establish a virtual online think tank that can harness the collective brainpower of our best and brightest.

We propose to address themes related to the mission of the 100 in a forum concurrent with 100 events such as the December Leadership conference. A panel of our top experts and leaders in this area will be invited to initiate the discussion by delivering a plenary session address on key topic areas, presenting emerging issues, prevailing trends, and expert predictions, as well as driving forces, countervailing forces in the environment, and expected paradigm shifts, new scenarios, and future implications for the society in general and the African American community, in particular.

This unique collaborative intellectual effort will be based on a series of online brainstorming experiences, engaging some of the best minds around the country, to explore new ideas, opportunities and challenges for the future of African descendants, particularly in North America. Invited emerging leaders will participate in breakout session to brainstorm opportunities and challenges using the bisociation brainstorming techniques presented by the workshop facilitator.

From this effort a series of essays that explore issues and problems from a futuristic perspective in variety of subject areas: economics and commerce; health and human services; politics; technology; workforce development; and education.

The Internet-based Virtual Think Tank will be facilitated using newly released software called Strategic Visioning System offered by Institute for Innovation, Inc. This group decision support system presents a new approach to stimulating creativity and innovation for futuristic insights. Using theories of analogical bisociative thinking, participants will learn a systematic approach to clarifying the “fuzzy front end” of idea and knowledge creation. Participants actively engage in higher-order brainstorming exercises that explore interactions of emerging trends in macro-environments and industrial and social sectors to discover opportunities and challenges. Participants will use this unique methodology to explore new techniques for trend analysis, knowledge creation, and opportunity recognition.

Virtual Think Tank Components

- LDI will identify themes, questions, or problems that need to be addressed.
- LDI fellows will organize visionaries in teams related to themes.
- Each participant will conduct preliminary research on emerging issues, prevailing trends, expert predictions, and possible scenarios.
- Group facilitators will facilitate an online discussion on their subject area, recruiting academics and practitioners that can make a significant contribution to discovering the future of their subject area.
- Group facilitators can solicit information and opinions from the general membership and community leaders outside the organization using the Virtual Focus Group module.
- Using Internet-based web log technology group facilitators will send emerging issues out to the electronic focus group list using bisociation methodology to stimulate discussion to discovery opportunities, challenges, and new ideas.
- The online brainstorming process will be continued after the initial session over a period of 2-3 months.
- From the ideas generated from the Virtual Think Tank, collaborators and authors will develop a series of reports: “The Future of the African Diaspora: New Paradigms for...(Health and Wellness, Economic Development, etc.)”

Expected Outcomes

- Reports, essays, and white papers generated by the Think Tank collaborators will illuminate new ideas in the following areas:
 - New models, new strategies, new program initiatives, and public policy agenda;
 - Potential implications for future generations and new paradigms;
 - Future public policy initiatives.
- The report will be published, publicized, and disseminated throughout the popular press and community organizations as a blueprint for future tactics and call to action.
- The LDI and Virtual Think Tank will become part of the branding for the 100 as a leadership development organization, establishing it as the vanguard organization for developing the intellectual capital of people of African descent throughout the world.