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Vital Voices and Bank of America Convene Global Ambassadors Program in Chicago, Providing Mentoring and Skills-Building to Women Entrepreneurs From Chicago and Around the World

Marking a Five-Year Milestone in the Partnership, Program Advances Women's Economic Empowerment and Leadership

CHICAGO — Vital Voices Global Partnership and Bank of America are bringing together women leaders and entrepreneurs from Chicago and around the world for the [Global Ambassadors Program](#), an initiative that advances women's economic empowerment through mentoring. The program takes place Sept. 11–15 in Chicago, one of three U.S. locations this year, including Charlotte, N.C. in May and Los Angeles in November. 2017 marks the first time that the Global Ambassadors Program (#GlobalAmbassadors) has been held in the U.S. as Vital Voices and Bank of America mark their five-year partnership.

Women play a critical role in advancing the global economy, with recent research indicating that their full participation in labor markets could help global annual GDP grow by 26 percent (the total equal to the current economies of the U.S. and China combined). Women are at the forefront of a changing business landscape according to a [recent study](#) of more than 1,000 small business owners. A majority of women entrepreneurs believe that over the next 20 years, there will be more women-owned small businesses compared to those owned by men, and that women will match or exceed men in executive leadership or C-Suite roles, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) field representation.

"The Global Ambassadors Program is an example of our company's long-standing commitment to advancing women's leadership and economic empowerment," said Anne Finucane, vice chairman, Bank of America. "It's one way we approach responsible growth, investing our capital to advance economic and social progress."

The Global Ambassadors Program connects a cadre of women entrepreneurs and leaders of social enterprises to a unique mentorship and skills-building opportunity – pairing them with distinguished women executives from a range of sectors and organizations, including Bank of America, to enhance their skills in key areas including leadership, financial management, business strategy and communications. The Chicago program will pair 11 Global Ambassadors (mentors) with mentees in the greater Chicago area, Australia, South Africa, Bangladesh, Italy, Philippines and Turkey.

In conjunction with the Chicago program, Bank of America will host a thought leadership event,

“Women Driving Economic & Social Progress” (#WomenLead), at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Speakers include Mika Brzezinski, co-host of “Morning Joe” on MSNBC; Valerie Jarrett, former senior advisor to President Barack Obama; Anne Finucane, Bank of America vice chairman; Melanne Vermeer, Seneca Women co-founder and Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security executive director; Alyse Nelson, Vital Voices president and CEO; Sharon Miller, Bank of America head of small business; and Steve Grossman, Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) CEO.

The Global Ambassadors (mentors) for the Chicago program are:

- Selin Beceni, partner, BTS & Partners, Istanbul, Turkey
- Laurel Bellows, founding principal, The Bellows Law Group, P.C., Chicago
- Megan Bendis, executive vice president, publicity, Universal Pictures, Los Angeles
- Mollie Colavita, regional managing director, Metropolitan region, Private Banking and Investment Group, Merrill Lynch, New York
- Eleanor “Tabi” Haller-Jorden, president and CEO, The Paradigm Forum GmbH, Zürich, Switzerland
- Lourdes Melgar, president, Mexican chapter, International Women’s Forum, México City, México
- Andrea Montalvo, news anchor, Televisa Foro TV; director/producer, “Ausencias,” México City, México
- Kathy Pickus, divisional vice president for sustainability, Abbott, Chicago
- K. Shelly Porges, managing director, Reservoir Q Global LLC, Washington, D.C.
- Sylvia Sánchez Alcántara, founder, Retos Femeninos & Tu Reto Emprendedor, México City, México
- Ann Thorn, operations executive, Mortgage and Vehicle Servicing Operations, Bank of America, Flower Mound, Texas

The mentees for the Chicago program are:

- Asha Bhat, CEO, Southern Aboriginal Corporation, Albany, Australia
- Judie Caribeaux, executive director, Family Shelter Service, Wheaton, Ill.
- Kimberly Eberl, CEO and founder, Motion PR, Chicago
- Kelly Fair, founder and executive director, Polished Pebbles Girls Mentoring Program, Chicago
- Loredana Introini, director coordinator, Fondazione Falcone, Palermo, Italy
- Katrin Klingenberg, executive director and co-founder, Passive House Institute US, Chicago
- Kirsty Galliard, CEO, Five Star Media, Johannesburg, South Africa
- Shafia Shama, owner, M/S Shama, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Amina Evangelista Swanepoel, founding executive director, Roots of Health, Palawan, Philippines
- Arzu Tekir, country director, WRI Turkey Sustainable Cities, Istanbul, Turkey
- Courtney White, president and founder, Culinary Care, Chicago

“We’re proud to partner with Bank of America to convene the Chicago Global Ambassadors Program, which will bring together truly inspiring women for mentoring and a cross-cultural exchange that will help position them as the next generation of leaders poised to drive economic growth and social change,” said Alyse Nelson, president and CEO of Vital Voices.

The Global Ambassadors Program is part of Bank of America and Vital Voices’ ongoing commitment to investing in women’s leadership development, a goal guided by the belief that strong leaders are important for developing healthy, vibrant communities and advancing economic growth. Since 2012, the Global Ambassadors Program has been held in 14 locations around the world – including Northern Ireland, Haiti, South Africa, India, Brazil, Japan and Australia – reaching more than 115 women leaders from more than 60 countries. Since 2013, more than two-thirds of mentees have reported an increase in sales and revenue growth following the program.

For more information on the Global Ambassadors Program, visit www.bankofamerica.com/globalambassadors. Follow [@BofA_News](https://twitter.com/BofA_News) and [@VitalVoices](https://twitter.com/VitalVoices) for updates via #GlobalAmbassadors.

Vital Voices Global Partnership

Vital Voices Global Partnership invests in women leaders who improve the world. Founded by then-first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, and guided by the belief that women are essential to progress in their communities, it has partnered with leaders from more than 144 countries who advance economic opportunity, increase political and public leadership, and end violence against women. Programs in strategic planning, business, advocacy and communications build critical skills needed for creating transformational change at scale. Through its global platform, women leaders expand their connections and visibility, accelerating shared progress for all. Visit www.vitalvoices.org to learn more.

Bank of America

At Bank of America, we’re guided by a common purpose to help make financial lives better, through the power of every connection. We’re delivering on this through responsible growth with a focus on our environmental, social and governance (ESG) leadership. ESG is embedded across our eight lines of business and reflects how we help fuel the global economy, build trust and credibility, and represent a company that people want to work for, invest in and do business with. It’s demonstrated in the inclusive and supportive workplace we create for our employees, the responsible products and services we offer our clients, and the impact we make around the world in helping local economies thrive. An important part of this work is forming strong partnerships with nonprofits and advocacy groups, such as community, consumer and environmental organizations, to bring together our collective networks and expertise to achieve greater impact. Learn more at about.bankofamerica.com, and connect with us on Twitter at [@BofA_News](https://twitter.com/BofA_News).

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