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CONTACT

Alex Ruiz
cpas@novoco.com
925-949-4300

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Novogradac Welcomes Three Members of Open Access Fellowship

National Accounting, Consulting Firm Part of Effort to Address Underrepresentation of Black, Latinx Professionals in Community Development Finance

SAN FRANCISCO—National public accounting and consulting firm Novogradac welcomes three paid fellows who are part of the [Open Access Fellowship 2021](#) program, which seeks to address the gross underrepresentation of Black and Latinx community development finance professionals working to improve health, education and wealth outcomes in low-income communities across America.

Allison Bernstein, Ashley McMichael and Jessica Washington start their fellowships this week as part of a collaboration between Project REAP (Real Estate Associate Program), the nation's leading and most successful initiative connecting professionals of color to commercial real estate for more than two decades, and Open Access, a newly organized group of executive-level community development finance professionals led by co-founders Gina Nisbeth, a director at Citi, and Jeff Monge, managing partner of Monge Capital.

“We are committed to being a change-maker in the community development arena and this is a significant step in that commitment,” said Michael J. Novogradac, CPA, managing partner of Novogradac. “Community development initiatives makes a difference in areas with significant populations of Black, Indigenous and People of Color [BIPOC] residents, but that’s not enough. We want to ensure that careers in development and finance—ownership, accounting, construction—are open and accessible to groups that have often been overlooked or excluded. The inclusion of these fellows, and future Open Access fellows, will surely improve the depth and breadth of our collective understanding about how to better serve communities in need.”

MORE

office 1160 Battery Street, East Building, 4th Floor, San Francisco, California 94111
mail PO Box 7833, San Francisco, California 94120-7833
www.novoco.com | 415.356.8000



Across multiple sponsoring companies, 26 fellowships are offered. The Novogradac fellows have each been matched with a mentoring trained professional and will work a minimum of 16 hours a week.

“We’re excited to have the chance to provide education and experience to people who may have missed out on this opportunity before,” said Amy Hook, Novogradac’s Chief Social Impact Officer. “The ability to have one-on-one mentorship and an insider’s view on how this world works will be a real benefit to our fellows. We’re also excited to welcome Allison, Ashley and Jessica—and to add their perspectives to our work.”

All Open Access Fellows—including those working outside of Novogradac—will receive 10 hours of virtual education in community development through Novogradac and the opportunity to attend a 2021 Novogradac conference in person or virtually.

To be eligible for the Open Access Fellowship, applicants needed to have a four-year college degree. There is no fee to participate.

About Novogradac

Novogradac began operations in 1989 and has grown to more than 600 employees and partners with offices in more than 25 cities. Tax, audit and consulting specialty practice areas for Novogradac include affordable housing, opportunity zones, community development, historic rehabilitation and renewable energy.