

LOWCOUNTRY
LOCAL FIRST

STRENGTH IN *Community*

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



DEAR FRIENDS AND ALLIES,

Thank you for another year of support and engagement and believing that our community is better off when locals work together. Locals are our sole priority and purpose. Your memberships, contributions, sponsorships, and participation are what bring this organization to life for the benefit of all.

Local entities are singular and exceptional and because of that, we are too. There is only one Lowcountry Local First. And we are here because we believe that being local matters. We believe in fueling the dreams of our neighbors and we adore the personality their ambitions give this place we call home.

The members we serve are big and small, less than 100 days old and more than 100 years old. We support businesses run by people of all ages and races and backgrounds and identities and preferences. Their sole commonality is that every single one of them is locally-owned and independent. And every one of them believes that being, and supporting, local matters.

We whole-heartedly agree.

Another trip around the sun together, and the journey just keeps getting better.



Locally yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jacquie Berger'.

Jacquie Berger,
Executive Director, Lowcountry Local First



Bert & T's Desserts dishing up ice cream at the 15th annual Chef's Potluck

LOWCOUNTRY LOCAL FIRST

Lowcountry Local First advances economic prosperity and local ownership through innovative and inclusive initiatives that build our community's wealth and wellbeing.

We work towards fulfilling this mission through:

- **AWARENESS:** Educating the general public on why it's important to choose local and influencing them to do so.
- **ADVOCACY:** Working with our elected officials, decision-makers and opinion leaders to foster a better environment for creating and sustaining local businesses.
- **AFFINITY:** Building relationships and knowledge by delivering resources, programming, networking, mentorship and more to local businesses owners from all sectors and stages.

2023 IMPACT

CHAMPIONING THE LOCAL MOVEMENT

We educate the general public on why it's important to choose local and influence them to do so.

In 2023, our member survey results showed that producing "Support Local" community awareness campaigns topped the list for the ways we can achieve our mission. Our team organized an ambitious calendar of public awareness campaigns aimed at engaging MORE members than ever before and informing our community of MORE ways to connect with one another than ever before. We went way beyond the "eat local" and "buy local" messaging to champion the *full* Local movement!

Ten months out of the year each focused on unique industry groups, such as Conscious Commercial Development Month in March, Prosperous Professional Services Month in October, and more.

IMPROVED ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

In April 2023, we officially rolled out a modernized website and member portal. For the first time, members now have the ability to login directly to our site and manage their own personal and business profiles, access member-only discounts and resources, register for events and more. The Local Business Directory was also enhanced with searchable keywords and filters, making it more useful than ever.

In 2023 we saw:

- **1.13M+** total website views
- **47K+** views of the Business Directory
- **232** members and their employees registered on our website
- **21** members supported the launch of Member-to-Member Offerings in September



Shop & Dine local yard signs were placed throughout the community to encourage local spending habits.

2023 IMPACT

USING OUR LOUD, COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR GOOD

In 2023, the Lowcountry Local First membership base included 485 local-independent businesses from across a diverse array of industries and representing 13,000+ employees.

We worked with our elected officials, decision-makers and opinion leaders to foster a better environment for our member businesses to operate within and thrive. In 2023, this work included:

- Hosting a **NORTH CHARLESTON MAYORAL FORUM** and inviting 5 key community organizations to join forces on a free, open-to-the-public dialogue. The conversation amongst the 10 mayoral candidates explored issues related to equitable progress and growth including the topics of the local economy, the city's growth and development, affordability, connectivity, and safety.
- Supporting the **CITY OF CHARLESTON MAYORAL FORUM** hosted by Pay It Forward, ensuring the voices of one of the city's largest economic drivers, hospitality, were heard. Mayoral candidates were held accountable to the issues facing this important industry.
- Promoting the importance of **ENGAGING IN LOCAL ELECTIONS** across the region.
- Supporting relevant local, state and federal-level legislative activity, including the **SC CRAFT BEER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACT**, the **CREDIT CARD COMPETITION ACT**, and **CHARLESTON COUNTY'S BETTER NORTH BRIDGE PROJECT**.
- Serving on the **UNION PIER COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL**, an important commercial development project on the peninsula, ensuring attainable commercial space for local businesses was a priority in the proposed plans.
- Working alongside the teams at **OUR MUNICIPAL PARTNERS** to support and strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems through small business training, workshops and commercial development projects.



North Charleston Mayoral Forum, Royal Missionary Baptist Church, in September.



Beyond Bookkeeping workshop at the Goose Creek Fire Department Headquarters in July.

2023 IMPACT

CULTIVATING THE RELATIONSHIP ECONOMY

We deliver resources, programming, networking, mentorship, and more to local business owners from all sectors and stages. In 2023, this work included:

- Hosting **10 LOCAL SOCIALS** at unique business host locations across the region, from breweries to barber shops to art centers. Dozens of attendees at each social were able to network and build relationships that matter, while we also spotlighted various local food and beverage vendors.
- Launching a new series of sector- and role-based **MEMBER MEET-UPS**, aimed at building collaborative and supportive relationships between like-minded groups. Groups kicked off for urban manufacturing members and operations professionals, and plans were made to launch meet-ups for more industries in 2024.
- Providing collaborative, affordable and flexible work space to more than **25 NEW COWORKING MEMBERS AT LOCAL WORKS**, including **13 COMMUNITY BUSINESS ACADEMY GRADUATES** who utilized grant-supported access to host classes and workshops for their businesses or simply to enjoy the productive space to work.
- Partnering with the College of Charleston MBA program to produce **3 LIVE, IN-PERSON PODCASTS** hosted at Queen Street Playhouse and streamed live on OHM Radio 96.3FM. We connected students with local powerhouse leaders in hospitality, data analytics, and marketing.
- Connecting member businesses with the guidance needed to start and grow their business through the **LOCAL EXPERTISE EXCHANGE**, which provides no-obligation, complimentary consultations with local experts in a variety of business service areas.



“The Local Expertise Exchange is a really great way to engage with other local businesses. We believe in our service and our mission, and to be able to educate and assist others in our community with the challenging topic of employee benefits is a pleasure.”

- Catherine Marret, Vero Advising



Urban Manufacturing Meet Up at Urban Electric in April.



Urban Manufacturing Meet Up at Rewined Candles in July.



August Local Social at Public Works Art Center in Summerville.

2023 IMPACT

EQUIPPING ENTREPRENEURS WITH KNOWLEDGE, SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL

The Community Business Academy (CBA) continued to grow by leaps and bounds as the core introductory program of the Good Enterprises Initiative that launched in 2019, graduating 281 total participants by the end of 2023.

A SNAPSHOT OF 2023'S COMMUNITY BUSINESS ACADEMY COHORTS:

- **63** graduates across 4 cohorts.
- This year marked our first cohort conducted in **PORTUGUESE**, with all 15 participants from Brazil residing in the City of Goose Creek. Other cohorts were offered in English and Spanish.
- **47** female, **15** male and **1** transgender participant.
- **27** Hispanic origin, **36** Non-Hispanic.

RETAIL RESIDENCY PROGRAM:

On December 1, 2023 we launched a new **RETAIL RESIDENCY PROGRAM** in partnership with The Station Park Circle where graduates of the Community Business Academy were given the opportunity to sell their wares in a retail setting on a quarterly basis.

Our first cohort included Mexican artisan-made decor by La Casa Love, clean-burning candles by Manzi Lux, and creative paint kits for the family by Crafty Gems Boutique. The program generated more than **\$1,700 IN TOTAL SALES** for the initial three participants.



Community Business Academy Fall 2023 Graduation at the Royal Missionary Baptist Church.



La Casa Love setting up her products on the Lowcountry Local First-sponsored shelf at The Station Park Circle.

2023 IMPACT

EQUIPPING ENTREPRENEURS WITH KNOWLEDGE, SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL

A SNAPSHOT OF 2023'S BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES' IMPACTS:

- We provided a total of **220 COACHING** hours: **189 HOURS** in English and **31** in Spanish.

BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES REIMAGINED:

In the spring of 2023, we provided mentorship, accountability, and ongoing educational opportunities to numerous participants, continuing our commitment to supporting their entrepreneurial journeys in the model of Rising Tide Capital's Business Acceleration Services. In the second half of the year, we piloted a more integrated approach to supporting our grads by listening to their needs and requests and catering our existing offerings accordingly.

¡PREPARADOS, LISTOS, PITCH! COMPETITION



The 2023 “¡Preparados, Listos, Pitch!” event was held for Spanish speaking students on October 7th and gave graduates of La Academia Empresarial de la Comunidad the opportunity to share their stories, vision, and plan. A panel of outside judges selected one talented and driven individual to receive a **\$10,000 PRIZE** to help take their business to the next level.

Andrea Serrano with Glossy Jewellery was the recipient of the 2023 grand prize. She plans to use this cash infusion to expand her accessory lines and develop capacity for wholesale opportunities.

2023 IMPACT

EMPOWERING BUSINESSES TO DO WELL AND DO GOOD

The 10th annual Good Business Summit held on February 9, 2023 was our largest and most vibrant yet! More than 350 business owners, leaders, entrepreneurs, and community activists from all across the region were able to gather in Charleston to learn alongside 34 local, regional and national speakers.

To serve the event’s diverse attendees, we enabled them to opt to listen to live Spanish interpretations of the main stage conversations and attend Spanish-language break-out sessions in the afternoon.



“Who knew that Charleston has such a bustling, vibrant, small business scene? As a native who is returning and a first time attendee of the Good Business Summit, I am inspired to become apart of this ecosystem that serves the community and world at large!”

- Keiona Eady,
The Authentic Messenger,
as shared in post-event survey



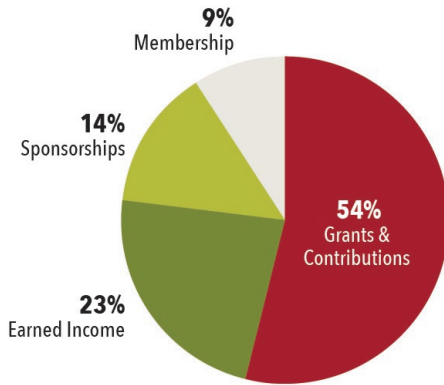
Good Business Summit Speakers from the Spanish language panel, *Brand Storytelling: Bringing Hispanic Heritage to Life.*

2023

FINANCIALS

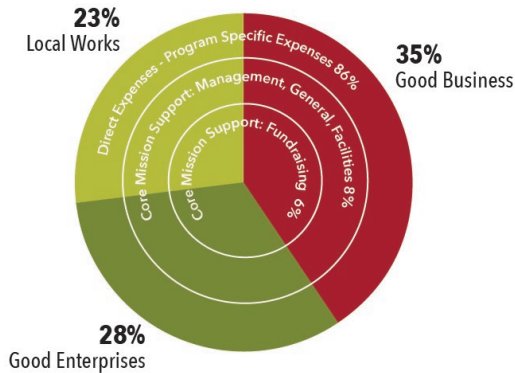
Lowcountry Local First is committed to financial transparency and accountability in appropriately stewarding our supporters' dollars to further our mission. For more information, please contact jacquie@lowcountrylocalfirst.org.

2023 REVENUE \$1,177,741



2023 EXPENSES \$1,233,872

100% of every dollar goes to impact.



Information provided is audited.



Our team tabling at the Charleston Farmers Market in May.

SUPPORTERS

We extend gratitude to the following 2023 donors who catapulted our work from ideas to action through their financial support.

\$100,000+

US Economic Development Administration

\$50,000+

Charleston County Economic Development
City of Goose Creek
Cummins
Kathryn Plos

\$20,000+

College of Charleston MBA Programs
The Economic Mobility Grantmaking Fund of Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina
Pathfinder Foundation
Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina
South Carolina Department of Commerce

\$15,000+

First Reliance Bank
Corrie and Andy Gladstein
Limehouse Produce
REV Federal Credit Union

\$10,000+

CLIMB Fund
First Capital Bank
SouthState Bank

\$5,000 TO \$9,999

Anonymous
Bank of America
Blackbaud

City of Charleston
Ruth's House Inc.
South Carolina Department of Agriculture
SMHa
Steen Enterprises

\$2,500 TO \$4,999

Addlestone International Corp
Brackish
Central Park Accounting
First National Bank
GCM
Terri Herubin
McKevlin's Surf Shop
Medical University of South Carolina
Nice Commerce
Patrick Family Foundation

\$1,000 TO \$2,499

Cheryl and David Bennett
Blue Bicycle Books
Charleston Payroll
Digital Ignite
Enlightened Soil
Jamee and Jim Haley
Home Telecom
Margie Longshore
One Love Kombucha
Pinnacle Financial Partners
Jonathan Sanchez
ShiftNow
Ted's Butcherblock
The Local Palate
Vero Advising

\$500-\$999

Linda and Ronald Berger

First Citizens Bank
Glaser and Company
The Heine Family
Noel and Stephanie Hunt
Edward Kronsberg
The Office People
The Station at Park Circle
Twelve South

\$250-\$499

Ann and David Marconi
Marjorie and David Sluter
The Padgett Smith Project, LLC

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTORS

Charleston Magazine
Charleston Music Hall
Folly Current
Forte Jazz Lounge
Foxworthy Studios
Francis Marion Hotel
Frankie Gilmore
Highfalutin Coffee Roasters
Holy City Events
Nelson Printing
One Love Kombucha
Republic Garden and Lounge
Rewined Candles
Roadside Blooms
SMART Recycling
The Bridge 105.5
The French Eclectic
The Local Palate
Uptown Hospitality Group
Verde
WCOO
West Of



Business members had the chance to meet with state-wide agencies, municipalities, CDFIs and more at the Small Business Resource Expo held at High Wire Distilling in September.

2023

HIGH LEVEL MEMBERS

CATALYST

Charleston Magazine
 Charleston Music Hall
 El Informador
 Newspaper
 Grassroots Wine
 Greystar
 High Wire Distilling Co.
 HLA, Inc.
 Indigo Road Hospitality
 Group
 Nice Commerce
 REV Federal Credit
 Union
 Ruth's House Event
 Rentals & Design
 SMHa
 Sonitrol Security
 Systems
 South Carolina Federal

Credit Union
 Steen Enterprises
 The Charleston Place
 The Local Palate

CHAMPION

All Good Industries
 Brackish
 Celadon Home
 Charleston County
 Park and Recreation
 Commission
 Charleston Crab House
 Charleston Wine + Food
 Festival
 Croghan's Jewel Box
 Cru Catering
 DataSpring, Inc.
 David Thompson Studio
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Estelle Colored Glass
 First Capital Bank
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 Home Telecom
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 Verde
 Vertical Roots
 Wills Massalon & Allen
 LLC
 Wonder Works

2023

OUR TEAM

Thank you to our 2023 Board of Directors and staff for their leadership and support.

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Terri Herubin, <i>Chair</i>	Charlie McClendon	Kate Schmieding
David Bennett, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Ed Kronsberg	Margie Longshore
Kerri Chisolm, <i>Treasurer</i>	Jennifer Ferrebee	Ryan Stewart
Jeff Plotner, <i>Secretary</i>	Jeremiah Bacon	Sharon McGhee
Andy McCarthy	Jonathan Sanchez	

2023 STAFF

Jacque Berger	Maud Bentley	Steph Fredericksen	Adelai Brown
Jordan Amaker	Erika Grimes	Kip Watson	Fatima Seabrook
Steve Fletcher	Mara Fields	Lauchlan Davis	
Raquel Padgett	Ryan Kortrey	Kelsi Rothfuss	



Looking ahead to 2024

Whether it's a pandemic, hurricane or economic downturn, the world will always throw curveballs and new challenges toward the local-independent business community. It's our unique duty and our great pleasure to be the nimble, ready-to-evolve organization always there to help lead, advocate and support along the way. We take great pride in being an organization that continues to identify needs and gaps in our local economic landscape and find innovative and inclusive solutions.

We feel particularly optimistic about the following:

- Amplifying seasonal public awareness campaigns to ensure they continue to have the greatest impact and reach possible for our members' benefit.
- Working alongside the region's new elected officials to ensure the unique needs of our local businesses remain forefront.
- Creating more sector-based Member Meet-ups to help build more tactical relationships amongst founders and CEOs.
- Exploring how we can create and support more creative funding opportunities for our aspiring and existing entrepreneurs.
- Building out more exclusive resources for members on our website's platform.



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LOWCOUNTRYLOCALFIRST.ORG

MAKE A LOCAL IMPACT



Join the movement as a local-independent business member and engage in the programming and advocacy efforts



Support and grow the movement with your dollars

PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE