

WE'RE ON A MISSION:  
**Putting Locals First**

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



## DEAR FRIENDS AND ALLIES,

If I had to sum up Lowcountry Local First's 17th trip around the sun in just one word, it might be "meet-up!"

In addition to all our events and networking, training and advocacy, and awareness-raising, what I loved the best about 2024 was the way we came together. As retailers and manufacturers, as operations professionals and food entrepreneurs, we gathered and asked questions and shared our experiences. We got a behind-the-scenes look at each other's teams and processes, and I like to think that we are all better off as a result.

You are the magic of Lowcountry Local First. It is the people we attract, our most engaged friends and members, that are our special sauce. And because you believe in collaboration over competition and that there is always more room at the table, our organization gets stronger and our community feels more connected every year.

Lowcountry Local First, at its highest and best, is the conduit for you to get what you need and to give back. By letting us know what you need, you give us the opportunity to help you find your footing and leap frog over obstacles. By sharing your time and your wisdom to support your fellow local business owners, you are ensuring that locals will continue to flourish.

Thank you so much for putting yourself in the mix, for lending your unique flavor and flair to this Lowcountry stew, and for investing in Lowcountry Local First.

We're looking forward to another year of working together to keep the Lowcountry uniquely and powerfully local.



Locally yours,

**Jacquie Berger,**  
Executive Director



Staff marching in the 2024 City of Charleston Holiday Parade to spread the Buy Local message.

## 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've been working towards this mission since 2007, creating a movement that champions a thriving local economy, and fostering an unwavering sense of local pride and connection.

### WHAT WE DO:

- **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.

Read on to see how these three pillars of our work showed up in 2024.



## 2024 LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT

# We deliver resources, expertise and a supportive network to local business owners, from local business owners.

Running a small business is hard and can often feel like a lonely journey. We're proud to be the engine behind a generous "give and take" system of shared knowledge, cultivating meaningful connections between experienced local business owners with those who are just getting started who can benefit immensely from the lessons-learned.

In 2024, we served more than 660 local-independent businesses, from solopreneurs to 100+ employee hospitality groups and banks. Our member businesses span across more than **20 INDUSTRIES** and **4 COUNTIES** of the Lowcountry – from Moncks Corner to Wadmalaw, from Hollywood to Georgetown.

- Our **LOCAL EXPERTISE EXCHANGE** was utilized more than 20 times.
- Our **COMMERCIAL SPACE ADVISORY TEAM** was utilized by 5 local entrepreneurs, resulting in 3 storefront openings.
- **GIVING GRACE:** 4 local businesses received Grace Memberships at no cost, keeping them plugged into our resources, network and support during times of crisis.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIP CAPITAL

In 2024, we hosted...

- 11 **MEMBER MEET-UPS** for business owners in retail, urban manufacturing and urban food manufacturing businesses, as well as for operations professionals.
- 10 **TACTICAL WORKSHOPS** on topics ranging from holiday marketing strategies to hurricane preparedness to creative employee benefits.
- 4 **LOCAL SOCIALS** were held for our entire network to build relationships that matter.
- More than 135 businesses utilized flexible memberships at our **LOCAL WORKS COWORKING SPACE**, which celebrated its 10th year anniversary with a special event in June.



*The Station Park Circle featured in our Gift Grace campaign video.*



“We received excellent insight and met wonderful advisors through this program (Commercial Space 101)! So glad to have participated. Don't know that we would be where we are without it!”

- Hannah Jane Dantzcher,  
Founder, Wake Refill

*Wake Refill opened in September in Hampton Park after consulting with our Commercial Space Advisory team.*



## BUILDING KNOWLEDGE CAPITAL

In 2024, we hosted four full cohorts of our **COMMUNITY BUSINESS ACADEMY**, with 31 native Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs and 26 English-speaking entrepreneurs graduating.

*“As a graduate of the Community Business Academy in Fall 2024, I was able to develop a business plan that wasn't just on paper it was practical, detailed, and designed to meet real community needs. Through this program, I gained far more than just a plan. I was connected with an incredible mentor who works specifically in the childcare space. I was given access to office space when I needed it. I received guidance on funding resources and ongoing support that extended well beyond graduation.”*

*Honestly, there are so many ways they helped me that I probably can't name them all right now but I know for sure I wouldn't be where I am without them.”*



- Julia Crumblin,  
Owner, Picking Up the  
Pieces Enrichment Center

Launched in 2023 in partnership with The Station Park Circle, the **RETAIL RESIDENCY PROGRAM** continued to generate both retail insights and revenue for Community Business Academy graduates in 2024.

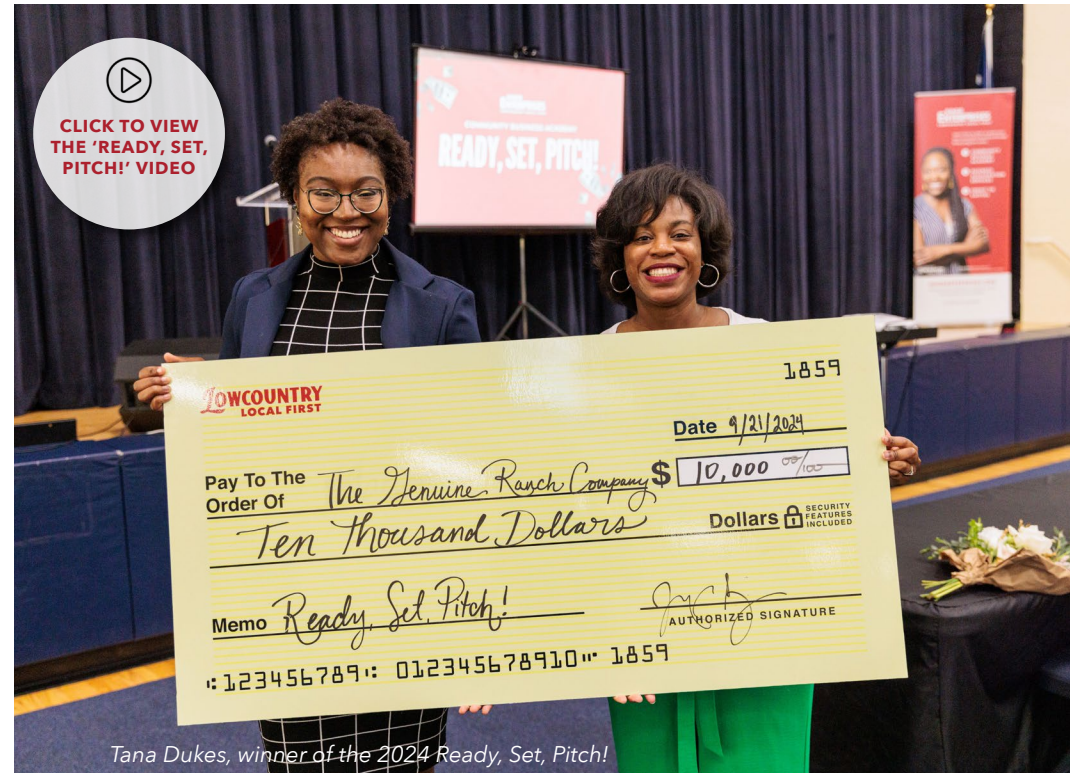
Our graduates have used this opportunity to showcase everything from jewelry and hand-sewn leather goods, to candles and body products. Featherly Clay and Amelie Jewellery's products were so well received that The Station has brought them on as permanent vendors. The 11 participating graduates in 2024 earned nearly \$12,000 in revenue from sales at The Station.

## BUILDING FINANCIAL CAPITAL

Our 2nd annual **READY, SET, PITCH!** was held in September, giving graduates of our Community Business Academy a platform to share their businesses with a broader audience and compete for \$10,000 and other prizes. The delicious dressings made by Tana Dukes of The Genuine Ranch won over the judges and won her the grand prize. Tana immediately put her winnings to work, purchasing equipment to help her scale up production and investing in her brand and marketing strategy. This investment enabled Genuine Ranch to scale from two local retail partners to a thriving network of eight.



Fall 2024 Community Business Academy Graduation in Goose Creek.



Tana Dukes, winner of the 2024 Ready, Set, Pitch!



## 2024 ADVOCACY EFFORTS

We work with elected officials, decision-makers and opinion leaders to foster a better environment to start and grow local businesses.

In 2024, Lowcountry Local First showed up for local businesses by...

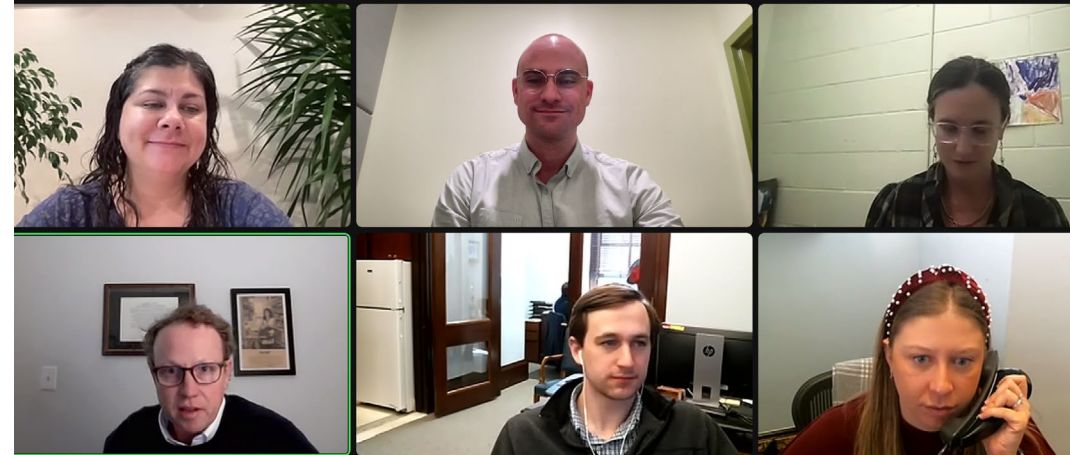
- Speaking at multiple public meetings to advocate for **AFFORDABLE COMMERCIAL SPACE** priorities in key development projects, including serving on the Union Pier Community Advisory Council to help shape the future of this important waterfront parcel on the peninsula. We also publicly advocated for affordable commercial space as a priority for the Courier Square project on the former Post & Courier site and for the Sumar Street re-development project in West Ashley.
- Advocating for progressive local policies like Formula Business Overlay Zones to protect the unique identities of **KEY INDIE-BUSINESS DISTRICTS**, both via public meetings and directly with elected officials in two North Charleston communities.
- Speaking in support of the Charleston County **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN**, which passed and moved towards implementation, seeking to achieve multiple long-term health, equity, economic, and resilience benefits for our communities.
- Supporting the public engagement process around the City of Charleston's **ZONING CODE REWRITE** to ensure the planning process is one that cultivates and supports local-independent businesses.
- Publishing an opinion piece in The Post and Courier advocating for stronger, enforced local preference **PROCUREMENT POLICIES** within our municipalities and the impact these can have on the success of our local-independent businesses.



*South Carolina State Senator Deon T. Tedder visits Local Works to chat with our Executive Director and Director of Advocacy.*



- Engaging directly with multiple **STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES** on both sides of the aisle around our local business members' priorities and pain points.
- Supporting broader efforts to move forward key **PUBLIC TRANSIT AND EQUITABLE MOBILITY PROJECTS** in the region, and in support of federal enforcement of the Robinson-Patman Act, a long-neglected piece of legislation that aims to protect small retailers from price gauging and kickbacks given to larger customers.
- Hosting a listening session for multiple members to share their stories with Sen. Lindsey Graham's office, specific to how **CREDIT CARD SWIPE FEES** continue to be a top expense pain point for their businesses.
- Co-hosting a virtual Town Hall with the Institute for Local Self-Reliance where the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Chair Lina Khan discussed efforts to rein in **MONOPOLY POWER** and level the playing field for small, independent businesses.



Members on Zoom meeting with Sen. Graham's office to discuss the impact of credit card swipe fees on small businesses.



CLICK TO VIEW  
THE 'KEEPING IT  
LOCAL' VIDEO  
FEATURING  
ROADSIDE  
BLOOMS

**Congress: it's time to pass the  
CREDIT CARD COMPETITION ACT**

"My small business paid nearly \$30,000 in swipe fees last year, which could have supported a new part-time employee to help us grow."

**Toni Reale, florist in South Carolina**

**LOWCOUNTRY LOCAL FIRST** **SMALL BUSINESS RISING**



## 2024 BUILDING AWARENESS

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

We know that for every dollar spent with a locally-owned business, three-times more of that dollar stays circulating in the local economy than if spent with a national chain competitor.

Local businesses play a critical role in community well-being, preserving the unique soul of our Lowcountry communities, creating good jobs, supporting a healthy local tax base, and by encouraging product diversity, fair competition, and environmental sustainability.

In 2024, we spurred the local movement by...

- **HELPING CITIZENS FIND & SUPPORT LOCALS:** The online Local Business Directory was utilized more than 33,000 times throughout 2024.
- **HELPING LOCALS FIND LOCALS:** More than 40 unique Member-to-Member Offers were promoted between member businesses.
- Hosting the 11th annual **GOOD BUSINESS SUMMIT** in partnership with SC Federal Credit Union, uniting our region's most socially-conscious and forward-thinking entrepreneurs and leaders to share tactics that build stronger companies and communities. The Summit brought nearly 300 business leaders and activists together who believe businesses should be a force for good. The full day event also offered live Spanish translation and Spanish-language breakout sessions.
- Challenging our citizens to shift their spending to local food and beverage sources during the **EAT DRINK LOCAL CHALLENGE** (April - June). 100% of participants said they shifted more than \$10 per week to local sources
- Celebrating our local food and beverage community at the 16th annual **CHEF'S POTLUCK**, where nearly 500 guests gathered at Holy City Brewing. The event featured 25 local chefs, 15 farmers, and 10 beverage partners.
- Hosting 8 **POP-UP PALOOZAS** and a Holiday Market for 15 local makers during the 13th annual **BUY LOCAL SEASON** (October-December) presented by REV Federal Credit Union.



Good Business Summit Speakers from the breakout panel, *Strike The Balance: The business case for radical self-care.*



“I find that being able to take the day to hear new ideas, meet new people, reflect and focus on working “on” my business rather than “in” my business [at the Good Business Summit] is very rewarding.”

- Trevor Crunelle,  
The Growth Coach of the Lowcountry

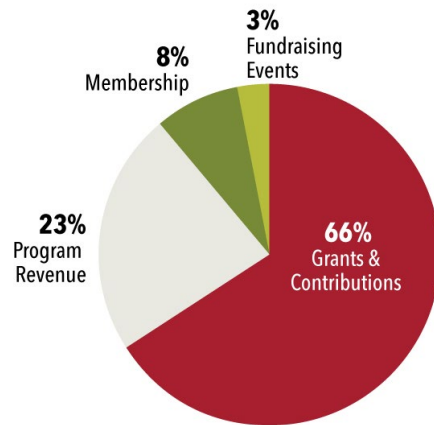


2024

# FINANCIALS

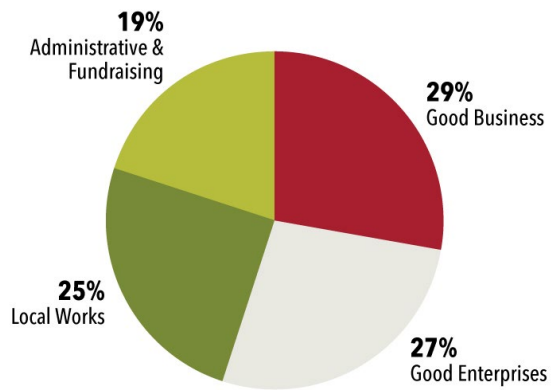
Lowcountry Local First is committed to financial transparency and accountability in appropriately stewarding our supporters' dollars to further our mission. For more information, please contact [jacquie@lowcountrylocalfirst.org](mailto:jacquie@lowcountrylocalfirst.org).

## 2024 REVENUE \$1,253,312



## 2024 EXPENSES \$1,252,838

100% of every dollar goes to impact.



Information provided is unaudited.



**CLICK TO  
VIEW 3 MEMBER  
STORIES**

Capturing the story of Coastal Coffee Roasters in Summerville.



# SUPPORTERS

We extend gratitude to the following 2024 donors who catapulted our work from ideas to action through their financial support.

## \$100,000+

Cummins Inc.  
US Economic Development Administration

## \$50,000+

Charleston County Economic Development  
City of Goose Creek  
Economic Mobility Fund of Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina  
Kathryn Ploss

## \$20,000+

College of Charleston MBA Programs  
Pathfinder Foundation  
Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina  
South Carolina Department of Commerce

## \$15,000+

Corrie and Andy Gladstein  
REV Federal Credit Union  
South Carolina Federal Credit Union

## \$10,000+

Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina: Wells Fargo Fund

## \$5,000 TO \$9,999

Anonymous  
Charles McLendon  
City of Charleston

First Capital Bank  
Gold Creations  
Limehouse Produce  
Palmetto Goodwill  
South Carolina Department of Agriculture  
Steen Enterprises  
TD Charitable Foundation

## \$2,500 TO \$4,999

Addlestone International Corp.  
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BizVox Communications  
Central Park Accounting  
CLIMB Fund  
Coastal Community Foundation Northern  
Lowcountry Regional Grant Fund  
GCM  
Home Telecom  
Homegrown Hospitality Group  
MUSC  
Patrick Family Foundation  
Southern First  
Town of Mount Pleasant

## \$1,000 TO \$2,499

Jacque Berger  
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Blue Bicycle Books  
Digital Ignite  
Encore Bank  
Enlightened Soil  
Harbour Wealth Management  
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Nelson Printing

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South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA)  
Ted's Butcherblock  
Town of Moncks Corner  
Vero Advising, LLC

## \$500-\$999

Travis Baucom  
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Emerger Strategies  
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Jamee and Jim Haley  
Pamela and Richard Hricik  
Carol Jackson  
Margie Longshore  
S3LF  
The Office People  
Workplace Benefits

## \$250-\$499

Ann and David Marconi  
Sally Matlock  
Sharon Payer

## IN-KIND CONTRIBUTORS

105.5 The Bridge  
Adams Outdoor Advertising  
Charleston Magazine  
Charleston Music Hall  
El Informador Newspaper  
Folly Current  
Foxworthy Studios  
Francis Marion Hotel  
Frankie Gilmore Video + Photo  
Glaser and Company, LLC  
Highfalutin Coffee Roasters  
Holy City Brewing  
One Love Kombucha  
PLUGS Appliance Center  
Rewined Candles  
Roadside Blooms  
SMART Recycling  
The French Eclectic  
The Local Palate  
Uptown Hospitality Group  
Verde  
WestOf

*Lowcountry Local First takes great care to accurately recognize all of our generous donors and supporters. If you notice an error in our recognition, please contact Kayla Sewell at [kayla@lowcountrylocalfirst.org](mailto:kayla@lowcountrylocalfirst.org) so we may promptly correct it.*



'Lowcountry Local Thirst', the collaborative beer we brewed with Holy City Brewing using rice from White House Farms for the 16th annual Chef's Potluck.



2024

# IMPACT MEMBERS

## CATALYST

Charleston Magazine  
Charleston Music Hall  
El Informador  
Newspaper  
Grassroots Wine  
Greystar  
High Wire Distilling Co.  
Indigo Road Hospitality  
Group  
REV Federal Credit  
Union  
SMHa  
Sonitrol Security  
Systems  
South Carolina Federal  
Credit Union  
Steen Enterprises  
The Local Palate

## CHAMPION

All Good Industries  
Brackish  
Celadon Home  
Charleston County  
Park and Recreation  
Commission  
Charleston Crab House  
Charleston Wine + Food  
Festival  
DataSpring, Inc.  
David Thompson Studio,  
LLC  
Dig South  
Digital Ignite  
Epstein Law, LLC  
Estelle Colored Glass  
Explore Charleston  
First Capital

Fiscal Flavors  
Consulting, LLC  
Food Is Good Hospitality  
GDC Home  
HLA, Inc.  
Holy City Brewing  
Home Telecom  
Homegrown Hospitality  
Group  
Lennon Construction  
Company  
PLUGS Appliance Center  
RCB Development  
Ruth's House Event  
Rentals and Design  
Southern First Bank  
Tinto Cafe and  
Provisions  
Verde



Staff lunch at Frothy Beard Brewing Company

2024

# OUR TEAM

Thank you to our 2024 Board of Directors and staff for their leadership and support.

## 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Bennett, <i>Chair</i>	Jeremiah Bacon	Charles McLendon
Jennifer Ferrebee, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Chris Brown	Jonathan Sanchez
Kerri Chisolm, <i>Treasurer/ CFO</i>	Ed Kronsberg	Alex Shi
Kate Schmieding, <i>Secretary</i>	Margie Longshore	Ryan Stewart
	Sharon McGhee	Mimi Striplin
	Andy McCarthy	

## 2024 STAFF

Jordan Amaker	Steve Fletcher	Brittany Lucas
Maud Bentley	Stephania Fredericksen	Kelsi Rothfuss
Jacquie Berger	Javier Jimenez Pereira	Kayla Sewell
Mara Fields	Ryan Kortrey	

## With Gratitude

Thank you for making this important work possible. We don't exist without YOU.

Looking ahead, we remain deeply focused on enabling aspiring and existing entrepreneurs to chase their dreams, support their families and create resilient, more inter-connected communities. Our newly launched Invest Local Initiative is already assisting entrepreneurs who've struggled to secure capital through traditional sources to explore creative and impactful pathways to the funding they need to launch or grow their business.

We're also investing more time into our advocacy efforts, intentionally listening and serving as a conduit between local business leaders and their elected officials and municipal leaders who help shape the landscape in which they operate. Together, our loud collective voice of 500+ local business members can make change and shape the systems that impact their success.

We're more dedicated than ever to the fight for a more level playing field for locally-owned businesses to survive across the rapidly developing communities of the Lowcountry.

**LOWCOUNTRY**  
LOCAL FIRST





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**LOWCOUNTRYLOCALFIRST.ORG**

## SUPPORT THE LOCAL MOVEMENT



Join as a Certified Local  
Business Member



Make a donation that  
supports our daily efforts



Partner on a seasonal public  
awareness campaign

PLACE  
POSTAGE  
HERE