

ANNUAL REPORT

2018

THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT.

LOWCOUNTRY
LOCAL FIRST



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

At Lowcountry Local First, we continue to evolve in order to meet the changing needs of our constituents and to ensure that the place we call home continues to be a unique and vibrant place to live – and one where all can prosper. As our city and region grow, it brings with it both challenges and opportunities.

Our work as an advocate for the local-independent business community has meant we are building strategic partnerships that allow us to address those issues that are most pressing to our members, including transportation, hiring and retaining workforce, flooding and sea level rise, and affordable housing. We will continue to be a voice for local and stay at the forefront of those issues that impact our businesses across all sectors – from accountants, to farmers, to manufacturers.

Thanks to your support, we have had some significant wins this year. One of these wins was working alongside the City of Folly Beach to develop a Formula Business ordinance that will “Keep Folly Funky” for generations to come. This unanimously-approved ordinance will ensure that the Folly Beach we know and love continues to be the unique community that draws both residents and visitors alike to the edge of America. We hope that this model can be used to maintain the individual qualities of many of our neighborhood business districts across the region.

Our organizational blueprint calls for us to be an organization that reflects and serves the community in which we live. We know that change happens at the pace of trust and that an investment is necessary to making all feel welcome at Lowcountry Local First. Over the past year, we have taken an assessment of our entrepreneurial ecosystem and realized that it is not one where all have an opportunity to participate. In 2018, we launched our Community Business Challenge that will provide affordable commercial space and wrap around services in partnership with Metanoia in the Chicora-Cherokee neighborhood of North Charleston. After engaging in conversations with stakeholders and community leaders, we will be launching Good Enterprises in 2019 to provide equitable opportunity for business ownership that will transform lives, families, and communities.

I am optimistic about the future and know that the work we have done over the past 12 years has taken Lowcountry Local First from a grassroots movement to one that is impacting our lives everyday. Together, we are keeping the place we call home one that reflects the unique flavor, people and character of the Lowcountry.



Jamie Haley
Executive Director
and Founder

2018 PRIORITIES AND IMPACT

ADVOCACY

In order to fulfill its mission, Lowcountry Local First dedicates considerable time, energy and resources producing awareness campaigns to inform and sway the habits of our citizens, as well as advocating for policies that recognize the importance of a strong, diverse local economy.

OUR ADVOCACY PRIORITIES FOR 2018 INCLUDED:

EXPAND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

- We acted as a voice for the local business community;
- Engaged in the development of a Local Food Policy Council, sharing a platform of support for local agriculture.

BUILD LOCAL CHARACTER AND CULTURE

- We advocated for land use planning, zoning, and policy to help local businesses thrive including: bike, transit, and pedestrian-oriented improvements; street and façade improvements; and affordable housing and commercial space;
- Engaged local developers in proactively incorporating local businesses into commercial space and including space that is right-sized and affordable for locals.
- Unanimously passed a Formula Business District with the City of Folly Beach that supports the recruitment of unique businesses and ensures the island's business district doesn't become homogenized by chain businesses.

KEEP DOLLARS IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- We raised awareness of the benefits of local businesses through campaigns like Eat Local Month, Buy Local Month, and Move Your Money Week initiatives;
- Reoriented state and local economic development incentives to support locally-headquartered businesses already invested in our community;
- Advocated for municipalities and institutions to give preference to local businesses in purchasing practices.

GROW ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP

- We addressed workforce hiring and retention issues in partnership with other organizations;
- We provided programs including the Good Business Summit and workshops, Growing New Farmers Program, and Local Works as infrastructure to support entrepreneurs and industries that are often ignored by traditional economic development agencies;
- Advocated for less burdensome regulations on small, local businesses and a swifter permitting process.

IMPACT 2018

MEMBERSHIP

In 2018, Lowcountry Local First was comprised of more than 869 members (business and Localist individuals) and more than 13,000 employees form our loud, collective voice.

- More than **THREE QUARTERS** of companies grew or remained at steady employment levels, with only 5% downsizing.
- For companies with hourly employees, the majority (**2/3**) provided wages above minimum wage.
- **67%** of member businesses worked with local companies for more than half of their B2B contracts. **64%** of member businesses actively increased business with local companies.
- For the fourth year in a row, hiring and retaining qualified workers ranked as the top challenge faced by our members. Competition from online companies ranked as a close second.
- Business owners from underrepresented categories increased by **6%** from 2017 to 2018, including women-owned, veteran-owned and minority-owned businesses.

"The team at Lowcountry Local First is passionate about being advocates for the local business community. They are very genuine people who believe in what they do and we are the better for it."

- Steve Kelleher

*Bottom Line Digital
Communications*



4 YRS

Median
Company Age



2/3

of companies
experienced revenue
growth in 2018



*Lowcountry Local First's full membership was surveyed in December 2018, with 121 responses collected (22% of total business membership).

IMPACT 2018

GROWING NEW FARMERS PROGRAM

Training the next generation of farmers and food system leaders for the Lowcountry.

- **100%** of participants said their expectations were met and/or exceeded
- **100%** of those who did not know their plans post graduation said they will be changing their career path
- **126 ACRES** of land owned by participants
- Most valued part of the apprenticeship for participants was hands-on experience. Mentor farmers most valued the ability to pass on experiences and skills to young farmers.

"I was in the position of needing a job and the program gave me the opportunity to get there and learn about the day-to-day. I'm going to continue working at Lowland Farms. 100%, that was the best part of the program for me."

-Justin Hancock
*Apprenticed at
Lowland Farms*



26

Participants



14

Mentor Farmers and
Food System Leaders



77%

Female Participants



63%

of graduates are currently
farming or working in
peripheral agricultural roles



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IMPACT 2018

GOOD BUSINESS SUMMIT

The 6th annual Good Business Summit was a one-day event presented by Lowcountry Local First spotlighting ideas and workable solutions for building your company with profit and purpose.

ATTENDEES FAVORITE SESSIONS

- Karalee Nielsen Fallert (Taco Boy, The Park Cafe, Royal American, etc.) and Steve Palmer (The Indigo Road Group) getting REAL about why culture and values must underpin their work everyday; outside-the-box approaches to building culture; and why profit and purpose should not be mutually exclusive.
- Thoughtful growth strategies and the real story behind the shiny exterior from leaders at Half-Moon Outfitters, Gotcha, Charleston Gourmet Burger Co, David Thompson Architect, and Obviouslee Marketing.
- How to navigate and stand out in the lightening speed world of social media from gurus at Rawle Murdy, with insider tips on how you should invest your time and money for best ROI.



300

Attendees



28

Presenters



51%

of attendees were
business owners



90%

of attendees were
delighted or satisfied
by overall experience

“Charleston takes care to reinvest in small businesses through education and opportunities like the Good Business Summit. Our culture is unique and this is just another way our city shines by example.”

- **Kirstin Karczmarczyk**
Lilli's Old Style
2018 Good Business
Summit attendee



IMPACT 2018

LOCAL WORKS

Local Works is an affordable and flexible open sector community workspace for entrepreneurs to collaborate, co-create, and support other local business owners so that all can thrive.

- **91 ENTREPRENEURS** and business leaders used this affordable, flexible community work space to start or grow their businesses in 2018
- **\$22.5M** estimated gross annual revenue generated by Local Works companies
- **\$323,000** paid to locally-headquartered suppliers and service providers
- **167 NEW BUSINESS CONNECTIONS** formed through interactions at Local Works



4

Companies grossed revenue in excess of \$1M



21

New Jobs Created



53%

Women entrepreneurs and leaders started or grew their business at Local Works



18

Business development mentor sessions with SCORE counselors

"Just starting my business, Local Works provided me with a professional environment to work in and to meet with clients and potential clients. The daily interactions with others working in the space is very beneficial, along with some of the programs that are offered, i.e. freelance Fridays. These are all things that I would not have access to if I were working from home."

- 2018 Local Worker



*Numbers based on a survey of current Local Works members in December 2018 with an 46% response rate. Actual numbers may be higher than reported.

CLICK TO
LEARN MORE

IMPACT 2018

COMMERCIAL SPACE SERVICES

We offer services designed to assist businesses with issues related to finding, opening, or keeping a business location.

A report released by the Institute of Local Self-Reliance in 2016 ranked rising retail rates in 13 cities across the country, and Charleston topped the list with a citywide 26% increase in retail lease rates over the course of a year. This reality makes finding an affordable space particularly challenging for entrepreneurs. We proudly offer our members two different resources to address challenges that may arise when it comes to a physical location for their business - be it finding, leasing, opening or keeping the location.

We regularly connect those looking for space to our commercial real estate broker members, but also provide a **Local Space Database** to connect our members with affordable, unique, or shared spaces that may not be listed on MLS.

Our **Commercial Space Advisory Team** is comprised of a dozen local volunteers on call to provide free, confidential sessions with other members who are navigating the often complex regulatory and build-out process.

THROUGHOUT 2018, LOWCOUNTRY LOCAL FIRST:

- Directly mentored **SIX LOCAL MINORITY BUSINESS OWNERS** with business planning, connecting to capital, and uniquely curated advising sessions
- Provided consultations or in-person advisory sessions to **SIXTEEN ENTREPRENEURS** through the Commercial Space Advisory Team

"Deciding on this space was a very intimidating decision to make, and we used the Commercial Space Advisory Team to validate our plans and make sure we were considering every angle possible. They went through numbers with us and validated that we were on the right track, which gave us the encouragement to move forward."

-Rachel & Jeremias Paul
Broom Wagon Coffee



IMPACT 2018

BETTER BLOCK REYNOLDS AVENUE

A demonstration project of what the community envisions for a more connected, walkable, bikeable, economically vibrant, and safe street.

Better Block Reynolds Avenue took place on October 26-27 based on a proven, community-led model designed by the Better Block Foundation to temporarily reshape a community and as a result, create permanent change.

Many volunteers implemented streetscape improvements including building and installing street furniture, sharrows for bikes, fencing for safety and traffic management, patterned crosswalks, plantings and shade structures. Traffic was slowed, local entrepreneurs were engaged, and the community held a concert, wing-eating contest, children's play area and much more – ultimately creating a vibrant, unforgettable day.

Extensive door-to-door surveys and interactive elements at the event showed that all residents want expanded economic development along Reynolds Avenue, but only 33% felt that they were currently offered opportunities.

The leadership of the City of North Charleston is evaluating how to permanently implement the façade, streetscape, and safety improvements that were recommended to them after Better Block.

BETTER BLOCK REYNOLDS AVENUE PARTNERS:



"A lot of times we think people don't care, but they do care... they love their community, they just need a little help sometimes."

-Apostle Elect
Emily Shaw-Drayton





What we're excited about in 2019...

2019 looks to be a transformative year for Lowcountry Local First as we continue to make the Lowcountry a vibrant, livable, and unique place that supports the local business and farming communities. Here are a few of the things we are excited about:

- Being the **VOICE OF THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY** in addressing transportation, housing, and flooding issues
- Tracking the long-term impact of our **GROWING NEW FARMERS PROGRAM**
- Holding **GOOD BUSINESS WORKSHOPS** that will support the long-term sustainability of the local business community
- Partnering on **GROWERS GROUP WORKSHOPS** that will support the success of the agricultural community
- **LAUNCHING GOOD ENTERPRISES** which will bring entrepreneurship training into underestimated areas of the region
- **INCUBATING EMERGING ENTREPRENEURS ON REYNOLDS AVENUE** in the Chicora-Cherokee neighborhood in partnership with Metanoia

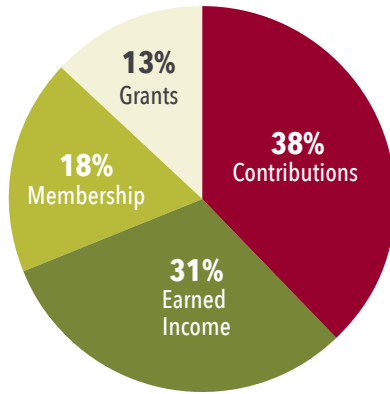
We are optimistic about the future with you by our side.

2018

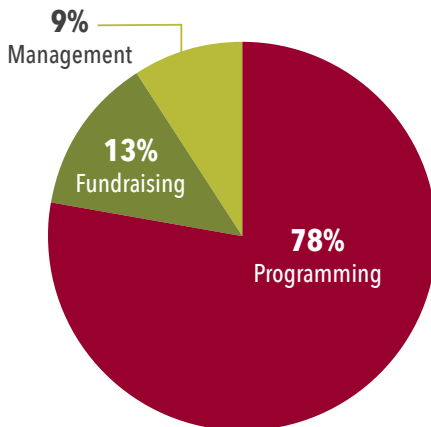
FINANCIALS

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 matt@lowcountrylocalfirst.org or visit our 'About Us' page to view our 2018 IRS Form 990.

2018 REVENUE



2018 EXPENSES



2018

SUPPORTERS

We extend gratitude to the following 2018 donors who catapulted our work from ideas to action through their financial support.

\$10,000+

Charleston
County Economic
Development
City of Charleston
Gaylord & Dorothy
Donnelley
Foundation
Limehouse Produce
Pathfinder
Foundation
Pearlstine Family
Fund
Singing for Change
South Carolina
Community Loan
Fund
South Carolina
Department of
Agriculture
South State Bank

\$5,000 TO \$9,999

Blackbaud
ByrdHouse PR
Julia and Lee
McLeod Endowment
SC Federal Credit
Union
South Carolina Farm
Bureau
Steen Enterprises
The InterTech Group
The Urban Electric
Company
Tiger Corner Farms

\$2,500 TO \$4,999

AgSouth Farm
Credit
e-vos
GDC Home
Greystar
Gulf Stream
Construction
Company
Heritage Trust
Federal Credit Union
Indigo Road
Restaurant Group
Lou Hammond
Group
TD Charitable
Foundation
The Beach Company
The Post and Courier
Thomas & Hutton
Engineering Co.

\$1,000 TO \$2,499

A Snappy Event
Aaron LaBerge
Agricultural Society
of S.C.
Avocet Hospitality
Group
Beth Clifton
Buist, Byars & Taylor,
LLC
Central Park
Accounting Inc.
Charlotte Caldwell

Corrie and Andy
Gladstein
Croghan's Jewel Box
Daniel Island
Community
Foundation
Frank Haygood
Freshfields Village
Jennifer Murray
Marshall Walker Real
Estate
Medical University
of South Carolina
(MUSC)
Mariana "Mini" Hay
Nathan & Marlene
Addlestone
Foundation
Nicki Root
Shoes on King
Sonitrol Security
Systems
Ted Dombrowski
Ted's Butcherblock
The Glass Onion
The Glasspro-
Heinauer Family
Fund
Wetzel Services, Inc

\$500 TO \$999

Alexander Reese
Beckham Insurance
Group
Blueprint Insurance
Group
BoomTown
Celadon Home

Cityvolve
Consigning Women
and Men
Courtney Rowson
David and Sara
Thompson
Ed and Polly Byrd
Edmund's Oast
Exchange
Green Door Co.
Henry J. Lee
Distributors, LLC.
Home Telecom
Jessica Derrick
Katy Perrin
Lowcountry Land
Trust
Mercantile & Mash
Meredith Siemens
Preservation Society
of Charleston
Rusty and Anne
Bennett
Ruth's House Event
Rentals
Terri Thomas
Workplace Benefits,
LLC

\$250 TO \$499

Andrea Woodfield
Bank of Walterboro
Catherine Hamnett
Charles Sullivan
Charleston Soil &
Water Conservation
District

David Marconi
Home Team BBQ
Jean-Marc Villain
Jessica Slaughter
Kimberly Abney
Linda Ketner
Pat Sullivan
Ray Weeks
Will Freeman

\$25 TO \$249

Abby Lesslie
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Kathleen Wells
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Ryan Malloy
Stephanie Hunt
Susan Watts
Susu Ravenel
Thomas Anderson
Tim Strike
Trent Drafts
Trevor and Emily Gildea
Warren Hayden
Whitney Powers
William McKenzie

IN KIND SUPPORTERS

Avocet Hospitality Group
BEAU Magazine
Brooks Signs
Broom Wagon Coffee
Callie's Charleston Biscuits
Candlefish

Charleston Ale Trail
Charleston Music Hall
Charleston Regional Business Journal
CHStoday
Edible Charleston
Feast and Flora Farm
Folly Current
Foxworthy Studios, Inc.
Glaser & Company, CPAs
Grassroots Wine
Grey Ghost Bakery
Hausful
Holy City Hospitality
Landrum Tables
Marcus Amaker Design
Middleton Place Restaurant
Nelson Printing Corporation
Roadside Blooms
Ruth's House Event Rentals
SMART Recycling US
Sperry Tents
Thomas Brothers Productions
Verde
Vizbii Technologies, Inc
WestOf

2018

OUR TEAM

Thank you to our 2018 Board of Directors and staff for their leadership and support.

2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Maud Bentley	Jamee Haley	Brian Wheat
C.T. Burton	Matt Hayden	
Larry Downey	Carrie Larson	

2018

HIGH LEVEL MEMBERS

CATALYST

Charleston Area
Convention &
Visitors Bureau
Charleston City
Paper
Charleston
County Economic
Development
Charleston
Magazine
GDC Home
Grassroots Wine
Heritage Trust
Federal Credit Union
Indaco
Limehouse Produce
Mercantile & Mash
Middleton Place
netGALAXY Studios
Oak Steakhouse
O-Ku
Palmetto Ford
Sonitrol Security
Systems

South Carolina
Federal Credit Union
South State Bank
The Charleston
Chronicle
The Cocktail Club
The Granary
The MacIntosh
The Urban Electric
Company
Thomas Heath
Coaching

CHAMPION

5Church
AAP
Applied Building
Sciences
BLU Restaurant &
Bar
Carnes Crossroads
Charleston Animal
Society
Charleston
Community Yoga

Crescent Homes SC
CresCom Bank
CT Lowndes and
Company
David Thompson
Architect
Dockery's
Duvall Catering &
Events
El Informador
Newspaper
Elizabeth Stuart
Design
Fam's Brewing Co.
Famulari's Pizzeria
FIG Restaurant
FRS Restaurant
Supply
Gotcha
Half Moon Outfitters
Hamby Catering &
Events
Holy Spokes
Lennon Construction
Company

Palmetto
Commercial
Properties, LLC
Pier 101 Restaurant
& Bar
Revival
Rooftop Bar &
Restaurant
Ross Printing
Steen Enterprises
Taco Boy
The Agricultural
Society of S.C.
The Beach Company
The Glass Onion
The Ordinary
The Vendue
Tides Folly Beach
Wills Massalon &
Allen LLC
Wonder Works

MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE STATE OF LOCAL:



Join the movement as a member business and engage in the programming and advocacy efforts:

LOWCOUNTRYLOCALFIRST.ORG/JOIN



Support and grow the movement with your dollars:

LOWCOUNTRYLOCALFIRST.ORG/DONATE



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LowCOUNTRY
LOCAL FIRST

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