

**LOWCOUNTRY**  
LOCAL FIRST

# *A year full of Local.*

**2019 ANNUAL REPORT**



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year I'm particularly thrilled to write to you to share the new layer we've added to our commitment to leveling the playing field for locally-owned businesses and creating an economy where all have the chance to prosper. Our recently launched Good Enterprises Initiative is equipping emerging entrepreneurs with the tools they need to run successful businesses. We're bringing resources to traditionally underserved populations as a step forward on the journey towards a more equitable economy. The curriculum for this program was selected because of its proven impact on the lives of individuals and communities with the potential to transform the economic landscape of the Lowcountry.

Furthermore, we continue to support the expansion of a vibrant local food system through our Good Farming Initiative and are in the process of formalizing a partnership that will make our work in sustainable agriculture and food systems even more accessible moving forward. Apprenticeship opportunities and community education continue to be an integral part of this work. As always we appreciate your intentional efforts to support our local farmers and fishermen throughout the year.

Our core work remains to advocate on behalf of the local businesses that are the heart and soul of our communities, those that provide the majority of jobs and make our economy one that is more resilient. In times of uncertainty it is more important than ever that we support our friends and neighbors in business and that we cast our vote with our dollars for the type of community we all want to live in.

You - our members, sponsors and donors - have created an upward trajectory for the organization which has deepened our ability to remain steadfast in our mission of cultivating an economy anchored in local ownership, while also bringing action and awareness to new mechanisms of change. Through our regular Good Business Initiative, we continue to strengthen the relationship economy that we believe keeps this place so special.

We remain steadfast in the change we set out to make when we began this work more than 13 years ago and we are grateful to have you by our side as a champion - to not only maintain, but grow a community we are all proud to call home.



Proud Lowcountry Resident,

*Jamie Haley*  
Executive Director  
and Founder



## Our Approach

Lowcountry Local First is a 501(c)3 nonprofit cultivating an economy anchored in local ownership, because local-independent businesses are the cornerstone of our culture, economy and character.

## Who We Work With

We work with a diverse range of partners from the private, nonprofit and public sectors.

- Local-independent businesses
- Policymakers and elected officials
- Local, state, and national nonprofit and governmental partners
- Donors and funders who share our values

## What We Do

Our programs implement a new model of local economic development - integrating advocacy, education and training, and relationship-building toward a more equitable, diversified economy.

## Why We're Different

We develop innovative models for sustainable and equitable local economies. Our work leverages our understanding of our more than 450 local business members and more than 12,000 employees across all sectors, and is informed by staff with expertise and on-the-ground experience in local economy-building, innovative economic development, entrepreneur support, sustainable agriculture, and food systems. We are connected to local economy and sustainable business organizations throughout the country, granting us access to the best models, case studies and thought leaders.











# ADVOCATING FOR A VIBRANT LOCAL ECONOMY

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.

## THE IMPACT OF OUR 2019 ADVOCACY WORK:

### KEPT DOLLARS IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY:

We activated citizens to shift their dollars to LOCAL through awareness-building pledge campaigns including [Eat Local Month](#) and [Buy Local Month](#), resulting in more dollars redirected to local businesses.

### LAUNCHED A PROGRAM TO CLOSE THE EQUITY DIVIDE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

We launched [Good Enterprises](#) - a proven entrepreneurship program for low and moderate-income aspiring entrepreneurs operating in the communities and neighborhoods that need it most.

### ADVOCATED FOR LOCAL CHARACTER AND LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD:

We worked with citizens and spoke out in support of: 1) connected, safe infrastructure; 2) zoning regulations to restrict chain businesses; 3) policies to prevent an overconcentration of hotels; and 4) affordable housing and commercial space.

### EDUCATED LOCALS TO HELP THEM NAVIGATE TRENDS AND THRIVE:

We shared best practices and top thought leaders on the trends impacting local businesses today, along with tactical How-To through our [Good Business Summit](#) and workshops and one-on-one consultations through our [Commercial Space Services](#).







# GROWING PUBLIC AWARENESS & SHIFTING HABITS



## 2019 EAT LOCAL MONTH

[Eat Local Month](#) (April) focused attention on local growers, fishers, and restaurants while providing opportunities for our community to engage in eating what's ripe and in season.

- **417 INDIVIDUALS** signed the pledge to shift their habits and spending to local food sources through the month of April
- **16 BUSINESSES** and organizations participated in the challenge as a team
- **100% OF PARTICIPANTS** said they shifted more than \$10 per week to local food sources and 48% shifted more than \$20 per week
- The resulting **TRI-COUNTY ECONOMIC IMPACT** made by those taking the Challenge was \$25,020 for the month of April and \$325,260 for the year



## 2019 BUY LOCAL MONTH

[Buy Local Month](#) (Nov 15 - Dec 15) stressed the importance of buying local and the positive community and economic benefits it has on the Lowcountry.

- **45+ LOCAL BUSINESSES** and local shopping markets were promoted and 85+ local businesses posted to the Buy Local Month website
- **1,500 "MY BUY LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS"** postcards were given to retail business members and the public to encourage the sharing of local business love and 80 "My Buy Local Recommendations" posters were given to members to display in windows and storefronts.
- **70+ "SHOP & DINE LOCAL" STREET BANNERS** were displayed along King Street, Daniel Island, Mount Pleasant (Coleman Blvd), and Park Circle shopping districts







2019 IMPACT

# BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP ECONOMY

Lowcountry Local First worked year-round to support and connect its more than 450 local-independent [business members](#), representing more than 12,000 employees across the region.

- **TWELVE LOCAL SOCIALS** were hosted at unique locations across the region to connect and engage the local business community.
- For the second year in a row, **68%** of members reported revenue growth.
- **64%** of members reported sourcing more than half of their products and services from local businesses.
- Based on member input, **WORKSHOPS WERE HELD** to cover flood and storm preparedness, business as a force for good, and building a successful online store.
- **WE INVESTED IN THE FUTURE OF REYNOLDS AVENUE'S** economic success by partnering with community development corporation Metanoia to incubate a family-owned bakery business, providing custom renovations, subsidized rent, and mentorship.
- **WE GUIDED EXISTING AND ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS** on navigating the world of finding or opening a commercial space, with a focus on completing the permitting process, negotiating a new or renewed lease agreement, and finding the right space for their business.

"Being a local business, it's important to support an organization that supports us all. Stay in touch with what Lowcountry Local First does by joining as a member and supporting their efforts to increase local awareness of businesses that are native to the lowcountry."

- Survey Respondent



\*Lowcountry Local First's full membership was surveyed in December 2019, with 121 responses collected (22% of total business membership).





## 2019 IMPACT

# RESHAPING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

The [Good Enterprises Initiative](#) launched in the fall of 2019 as a catalyst to reshape the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem to one that provides equitable opportunity for business ownership, in order to transform lives and communities. The program provides business education and mentorship specifically tailored to underserved women and minority entrepreneurs, creating economic opportunity for all.

- We welcomed a new LLF team member, **RAQUEL PADGETT**, to serve as Program Director for this important work.
- **23 ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS GRADUATED** our inaugural twelve-week Community Business Academy - ready to launch or grow a diverse array of community-enriching businesses including a bakery, barber shop, electrician, clothing designer, and event-planner.
- Our entrepreneur class ranged in age from 18 to 64 years old, and included **87%** people of color, and **61%** women.
- A majority of graduates have opted to stay involved in the initiative through on-going **BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES**, coaching, workshops, and customized mentorship in 2020.





## 2019 IMPACT

# GROWING NEW FARMERS AND A COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTS THEM

We know building a pipeline of new farmers is essential to keeping the tradition of local food and Lowcountry culture alive and thriving. Our [Growing New Farmers](#) program provides foundational knowledge and experiential training to support aspiring farmers' journeys in sustainable agriculture.

A 2019 program evaluation helped us assess the program and plan for the future, showing:

- **141 PROGRAM ALUMNI** were surveyed with a 47% response rate
- **83%** said the program had influenced their career path
- **200+ ACRES OF FARMLAND** are owned by graduates of the program
- **131 JOBS HAVE BEEN CREATED** or filled in agriculture to support graduates of the program
- **80% OF GRADUATES** have worked in a food or agriculture-related field since their graduation

In order to reduce the cost and barriers of entry to the program moving forward, a new partnership is being pursued.

Lowcountry Local First also continues to promote regional workshops, trainings, mentorship and job opportunities for new and established farmers through a regional list-serv, monthly newsletter and social media.







2019 IMPACT

# PROVIDING AFFORDABLE, FLEXIBLE COMMUNITY WORK SPACE THROUGH LOCAL WORKS

[Local Works](#), our community work space on the upper peninsula, continued to provide affordable and inspiring work space to more than 60 unique businesses throughout 2019.

- **131 NEW JOBS** created by Local Works companies
- **\$429,925** paid to locally-headquartered suppliers and service providers
- **201 NEW BUSINESS CONNECTIONS** formed through interactions at Local Works
- **41%** of Local Works companies were woman-owned, minority-owned, and/or veteran-owned



“For the past four years my team worked from Local Works and have seen first-hand the grit, soul and dedication this people-powered organization brings to everything they do. Through them, I’ve learned what it means to be a Localist and why local businesses are so vital to the future growth of the Lowcountry. ...I am grateful for the connections I have made and looking for ways my company can give back to the Lowcountry.”

- Anonymous Coworker

“I am so glad you all are here. I’ve launched 3 businesses from Local Works and couldn’t have done it without you.”

- Anonymous Coworker

*\*Numbers based on a survey of current Local Works members in December 2019 with an 56% response rate. Actual numbers may be higher than reported.*

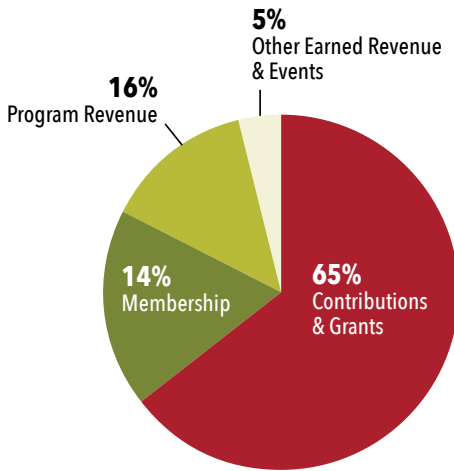




# FINANCIALS

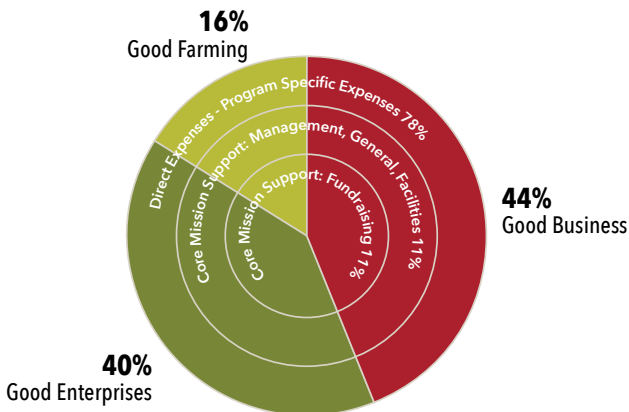
Lowcountry Local First is committed to financial transparency and accountability in appropriately stewarding our supporters' dollars to further our mission. For more information, please contact [barbie@lowcountrylocalfirst.org](mailto:barbie@lowcountrylocalfirst.org) or visit our 'About Us' page to view our [2019 IRS Form 990](#).

## 2020 PROJECTED REVENUE \$1,118,645



## 2020 PROJECTED EXPENSES \$1,150,350

100% of Every Dollar Goes to Impact





# SUPPORTERS

We extend gratitude to the following 2019 donors who catapulted our work from ideas to action through their financial support.

**\$10,000+**

Bank of America Grants  
 Charleston County Economic Development  
 Fig Restaurant  
 Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation  
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John Chilton	



2019

# OUR TEAM

Thank you to our 2019 Board of Directors and staff for their leadership and support.

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## 2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Terri Thomas, <i>Treasurer</i>	"Mini" Mariana Hay	Meredith Siemens
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2019

# HIGH LEVEL MEMBERS

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 Limehouse Produce  
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 The Urban Electric Company  
 The Vendue  
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 Vertical Roots  
 Wills Massalon & Allen LLC  
 Wonder Works



## What we're excited about in 2020...

In 2019, we made great strides towards promoting opportunities for local minority-owned, women-owned and veteran-owned businesses and in 2020 we're hoping to continue building on that momentum.

We've got big goals for 2020, including:

- Increase the public awareness of the benefits of the local businesses through awareness campaigns like Eat Local Month and Buy Local Month.
- Educate citizens, media, and policy makers on the civic, economic and environmental benefits of supporting locally-headquartered businesses.
- Bridge the gaps in entrepreneurial support through Good Business, Good Farming and Good Enterprises initiatives, because we believe ownership matters and every entrepreneur deserves access and opportunity.
- Provide business education and coaching in both English and Spanish that is specifically tailored to underserved entrepreneurs and located in the communities that need it most.
- Grow the presence of 'Formula Business' districts to ensure our communities are aesthetically unique and economically diverse, while preventing homogenization by chain businesses.
- **CELEBRATE THE POWER OF PHILANTHROPY THROUGH OUR ANNUAL GIVING DAY ON MAY 20, 2020**





1630-2 Meeting St  
Charleston, SC 29405  
(843) 801-3390

**LOWCOUNTRYLOCALFIRST.ORG**

**MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE STATE OF LOCAL:**



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

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Support and grow the movement with  
your dollars:

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