

EMBRACING THE NEW NORMAL

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

LOWCOUNTRY
LOCAL FIRST



Grace Received, Grace Given

DEAR FRIENDS,

As an incoming Executive Director riding on the shoulders of a small (like me) but mighty founder, I have the opportunity to take pride in the work of an organization I lead, but have not built. I take pride in the strength of a powerful, passionate team I have had only a small hand in bringing together. I take pride in a community I have lived in but feel I am only now discovering.

This community, though... this community is outstanding. You – our local businesses, shoppers, donors, supporters – you are the beating heart. Your passion for the Lowcountry powers a mutually reinforcing loop of community wellbeing, economic equity, opportunity, and connectedness. You are here for us, and you are here for each other.

At the end of 2021, we put out a call. We asked those of you who had recovered, or were well on your way, to support those who were still struggling. We asked you to give GRACE, to cover the costs that would allow us to bring lapsed members back into the fold. And you did. You gave generously. You answered the call.

As a result of your community-minded generosity, our membership is now more than 500 strong – just about the biggest we've ever been. As always, we exist to champion and support you, to listen and to amplify your voices, and this year, we plan to be louder than ever.

The past two years have been challenging, but they have made us wiser. Together we are learning to be more flexible and more comfortable in the discomfort of not knowing or being able to predict or have enough. As a community, we are finding the bright spots in this discomfort.

We will continue to remind ourselves and each other to give GRACE – to our servers, to our coworkers, to our business partners and providers. As we move through and hopefully out of this pandemic together, we continue to see that the more we are connected as a community of businesses, the better off all of us we will be. Lowcountry Local First is here for that, and we are so grateful that you are too.



Locally yours,

Jacquie Berger,
Executive Director, Lowcountry Local First



The Tiny Tassel supporting Buy Local Season

LOWCOUNTRY LOCAL FIRST

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 inclusive local economies. Our work leverages our understanding of more than 500 local-independent business members with more than 12,000 employees across the region. Our work is informed by a staff and board with expertise and on-the-ground experience in local-economy building, equitable entrepreneurship support and advocacy that levels the playing field.

2021 IMPACT

A GRACE-FILLED NEW NORMAL

The pandemic that hit the world in 2020 continued to ebb and flow and wreak havoc on the local business community throughout 2021. Compounded by logistical delays, rising cost of goods and labor shortages, many who had hoped to have recovered and returned to normal spending habits could not.

Our end-of-year campaign raised more than \$51,000 to create a new Grace Fund which allowed us to reactivate memberships at no cost to the many businesses that had lapsed during the height of the pandemic and were not yet able to comfortably recommit to that annual expense.

This fund, so generously supported by those ready and willing to help create a rising tide, welcomed back 200 members into the local movement, enabling those businesses to continue to benefit from the network of peers, conscious consumers and direct support made available to them.

"We are still underwater financially from 2020 and this gives us some needed air. Thank you."

- **LowCountry Studios,**
Owner



"I was one those businesses that had to say "no" to renewing my membership in 2020. But now, I want to back pay and pay it forward by paying for two other businesses' memberships so that they can come back into the fold."

- **Patrick Wolfe,**
Gold Creations

[View the Gift Grace video](#)



Gold Creations in the City Market

2021 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 2021, this included:

2021 EAT LOCAL SEASON: EAT LOCAL, BE KIND

Eat Local Season carried a theme of kindness as the food and beverage community battled staffing shortages and impatient customers. A broad grassroots marketing campaign encouraged an awareness and understanding of the issues facing our beloved local businesses and drove support their way.

- **160+** individuals signed the pledge to shift \$10+/week to local food sources throughout the month of May.
- **3K+** individuals utilized the digital guide on EatLocalSeason.com throughout May-June.
- **500+** attendees enjoyed live music, local food and drinks at The Bend for our 13th annual Chef's Potluck fundraiser event, reformatted to be safe for the ongoing COVID-19 conditions. The event featured 9 local chefs, 6 local beverage producers and 2 local bands.

2021 BUY LOCAL SEASON: BUY LOCAL, FEEL GOOD

Buy Local Season carried a theme of good vibes as we reminded consumers just how good it feels to support locals with our holiday spending. Digital and in-person tactics were utilized to drive community awareness and action around the importance of buying local.

- **5 "BUY LOCAL, FEEL GOOD FESTS"** were hosted all across the Lowcountry, with 72 businesses engaging in the promotion and 30 raffle prizes awarded to local shoppers who provided receipts proving local purchases.
- **\$20K WAS SHIFTED** to local businesses in Nov-Dec through the Buy Local Pledge.
- **18 LOCAL MAKERS MARKETS** promoted through the website and social media.

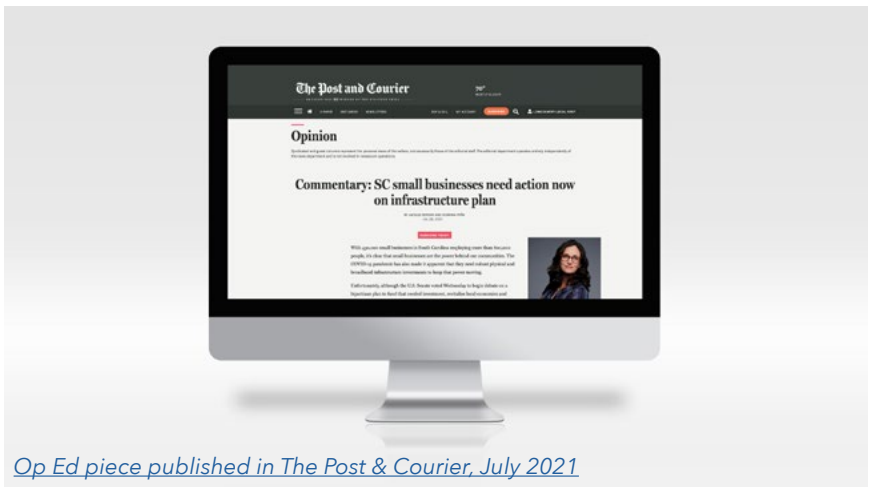


Buy Local, Feel Good Fest in South Windermere

USING OUR LOUD, COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR GOOD

We work with our elected officials, decision-makers and opinion leaders to foster a better environment for creating and sustaining local businesses. In 2021, this work included:

- Championing proven local policy strategies to support local businesses, including: zoning tools that restrict chain businesses; removing parking minimums; expanding outdoor dining; creating seats at the table for racial economic empowerment; and increasing access to financial capital.
- Partnering with Small Business Rising, a coalition of independent businesses and small business organizations to tell the stories of independent businesses impacted by corporate monopolies like Amazon and the impacts of concentrated market power on small businesses, as well as advance legislation to level the playing field.
- Connecting the local business community to resources to help navigate the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, including federal, state, and private sector relief programs, as well as opportunities to speak up and out on the need for more relief, such as replenishing the Restaurant Revitalization Fund program.



Op Ed piece published in The Post & Courier, July 2021



Funding My Small Business Roundtable with Rep. Marvin Pendarvis, Aug 2021

2021 IMPACT

CULTIVATING THE RELATIONSHIP ECONOMY

We deliver resources, programming, networking, mentorship and more to local businesses of all shapes and sizes. In 2021, this work included:

- We safely welcomed back our in-person, monthly Local Socials starting in May 2021, **HOSTING 6** throughout the year in various locations. These networking opportunities provided members the opportunity to introduce themselves to their peers and start to build valuable relationships.
- We officially reopened [Local Works Coworking Space](#) in January 2021 with a well-attended ribbon cutting ceremony. Local Works serves as an affordable, flexible space for entrepreneurs, creatives and teams to operate in a collaborative, inspiring environment. The new location in the Lumberyard development on the upper peninsula greatly increased its square footage from the original location and provides ample private office space in addition to the open coworking desks. We served **52 COWORKING MEMBERS** and hosted **136 GUESTS** in the space throughout 2021.
- We launched a new podcast in May 2021, "[Small Talks, Big Ideas with Steve](#)," featuring informative conversations with our members, supporters and community leaders. It was converted to a live, biweekly radio show on WOHM 96.3FM, a local nonprofit radio station based in downtown Charleston, which then feeds into the podcast after its original broadcast. **10 PODCAST EPISODES** were released in 2021 and each live episode on WOHM 96.3FM has a potential signal reach of more than 100k regional listeners.



Local Works Ribbon Cutting, January 2021



July 2021 Local Social at Taco Boy Downtown

2021 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 128 total participants by the end of 2021.

At the end of 2020, two of our CBA program graduates (both native Spanish speakers) were trained to serve as instructors. In both the Spring and the Fall of 2021, we offered the [Academy in Spanish](#), making Lowcountry Local First the only organization in the region offering this service to the local Hispanic community.

A snapshot of 2021's Community Business Academy Graduates:

59 Graduates Across 6 Cohorts:

- 38 out of 59 participants were in business, making sales upon entering the program
- 10 different countries represented across the cohorts
- 11 males and 48 females
- 29 Hispanics or Latinos, 25 African Americans, 5 Caucasians

SPRING SPOTLIGHT

Frances and her daughter Miranda graduated the program together in the Spring of 2021 and are working with their family to launch ***Rollen's Raw Grains***, producing Carolina Gold Rice.



FALL SPOTLIGHT

Lauris, a Fall 2021 graduate, was able to acquire a business loan from our partners at the Climb Fund to help expand her Mount Pleasant-based business, ***Hair by Lauris***.





Students of the Spanish language CBA class

2021 IMPACT

EQUIPPING ENTREPRENEURS WITH KNOWLEDGE, SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL

Community Business Academy graduates are encouraged to work one-on-one with a coach to set objectives, create a plan, and take meaningful steps towards accomplishing their goals and moving their business forward.

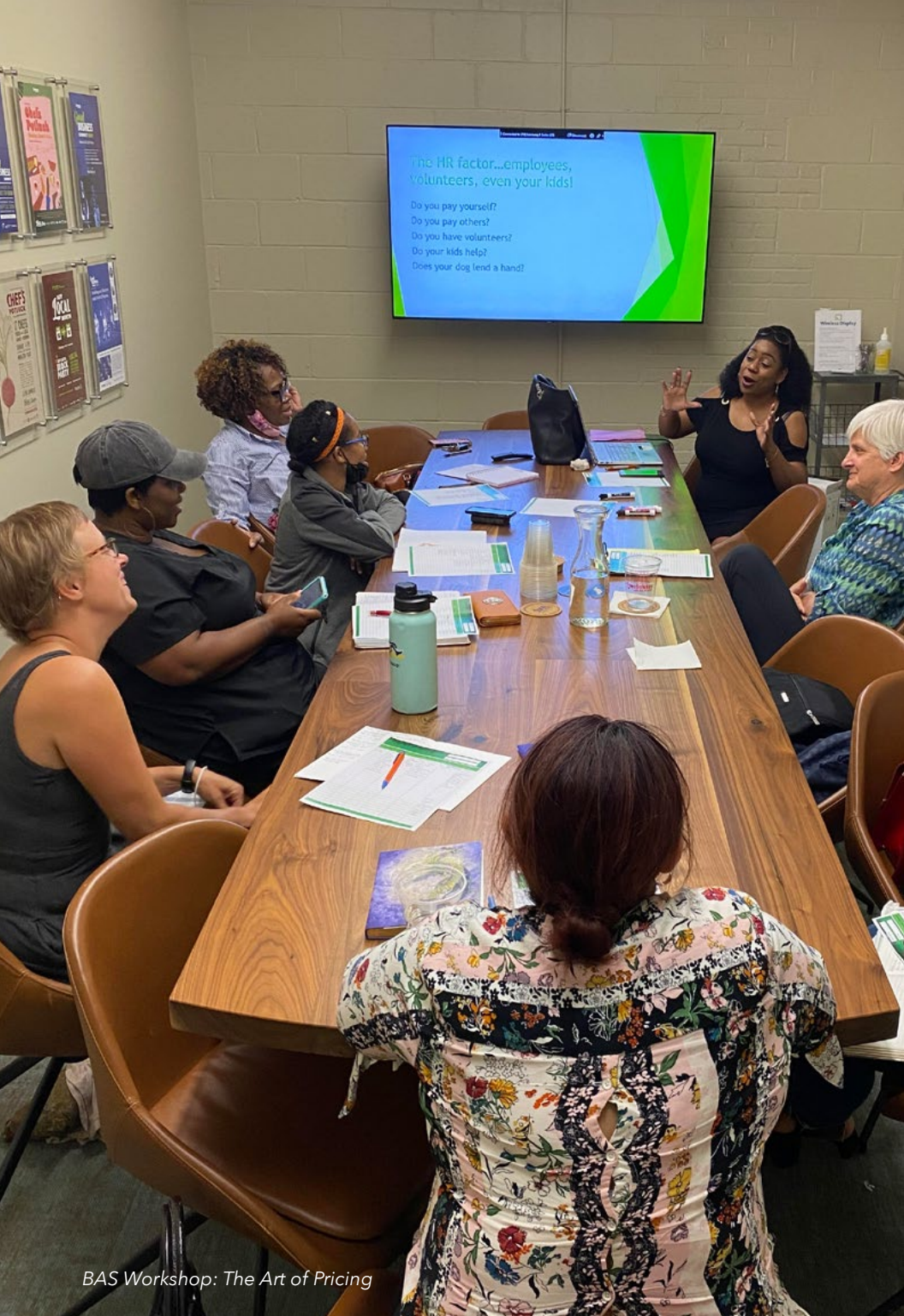
A snapshot of 2021 [Business Acceleration Services](#)' impacts:

- **64 PARTICIPANTS** were provided mentorship, accountability and ongoing educational opportunities
- **20 EXPERT COACHES** offered their expertise
- **4 INDUSTRY SMALL GROUPS** were hosted for alumni to stay connected with peers
- **4 WEBINARS AND 4 WORKSHOPS** were hosted in English and Spanish, with topics ranging from banking and licensing to pricing and social media.
- **400+** utilizations of the online Alumni Resource Center

"The Good Enterprises program is critical to Lowcountry Local First's mission to provide the necessary skills and resources to help local entrepreneurs define, accomplish, and exceed their objectives and ambitions. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the purpose and serve the entrepreneurs in our community."

- Sharon McGhee,
HR Cares Rx,
Good Enterprises Coach





BAS Workshop: The Art of Pricing

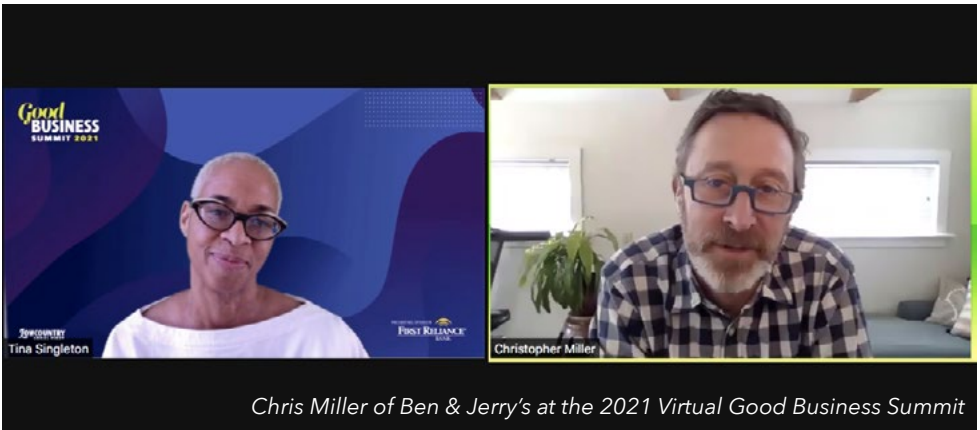
2021 IMPACT

EMPOWERING BUSINESSES TO DO WELL AND DO GOOD

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, LLF held its first ever *virtual Good Business Summit* presented by First Reliance Bank, spanning two mornings in February 2021. 35 presenters and more than 230 attendees made the virtual Summit inspiring and actionable.

- **YOU REALLY LOVED THE SUMMIT SESSIONS:** *Sparking Social Justice with Chris Miller of Ben & Jerry's and True Confessions with Andy Shallal of Busboys & Poets*
- **YOU SAID IT BEST:** "We allowed our entire team to take part in the event and we had a round table discussion around the content following the summit. From that, we are excited to dive into some of the concepts around narrowing into our core values to help continue to spread our messaging around supporting diversity, equity and inclusion and combating racial injustice."
- 2021 attendee, as shared in post-event survey

Prior to and following the virtual Summit, we hosted virtual Good Business Webinars for our members, such as "Crisis-Proofing Your HR Policies." When it was safe to do so, in-person workshops continued to funnel expert knowledge to our members, with topics ranging from accessing capital to recruiting and retaining employees.



Chris Miller of Ben & Jerry's at the 2021 Virtual Good Business Summit



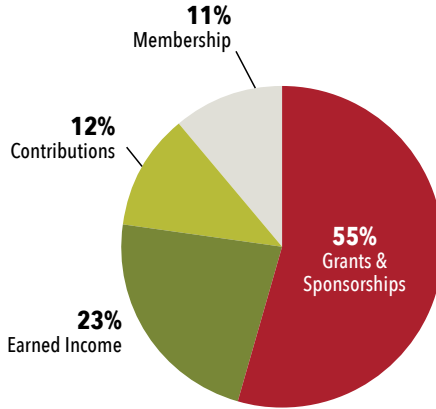
Connecting to Capital Workshop, May 2021

2021

FINANCIALS

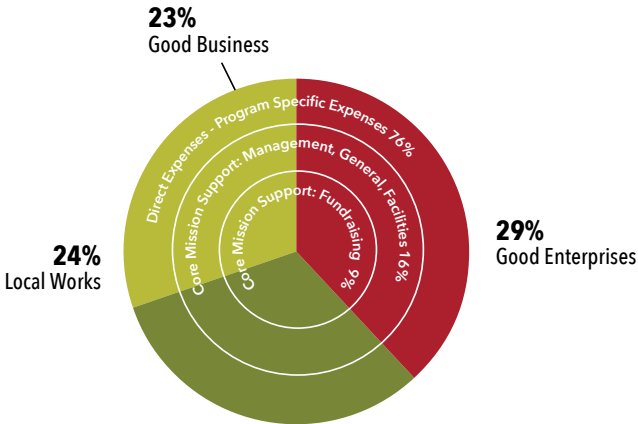
Lowcountry Local First is committed to financial transparency and accountability in appropriately stewarding our supporters' dollars to further our mission. For more information, please contact jacquie@lowcountrylocalfirst.org.

2021 REVENUE \$992,612



2021 EXPENSES \$1,066,912

100% of Every Dollar Goes to Impact



Information provided is unaudited. 2021 financial audit will be completed mid-year in 2022.



*Steve Fletcher and
Jacquie Berger*

2021

SUPPORTERS

We extend gratitude to the following 2021 donors who catapulted our work from ideas to action through their financial support.

\$20,000+

U.S. Economic Development Administration
Kathryn Salmanowitz
Pathfinder Foundation
SC Department of Commerce
Sisters of Charity Foundation of SC
Truist Foundation

\$10,000+

Charleston County Economic Development
Corrie and Andy Gladstein
Dave Dawson
Greystar
Singing for Change
Wells Fargo

\$5,000 TO \$9,999

Daniel Island Community Foundation
Patrick Family Foundation
South State Bank
TD Charitable Foundation

\$2,500 TO \$4,999

Adam Nevill
Charles McLendon
Melonie Hammond-Trace
Ohana East
Ruth's House Event Rentals & Design
Sarah's Dumps LLC

\$1,000 TO \$2,499

Charles Andrew McCarthy
Charles McLendon
Charlotte Caldwell
Frank Haygood
Jacquie Berger
Jamee and Jim Haley
Jeff Plotner
Jessica Slaughter
Justin Ferira
Nicole Root
SC Ports Authority
Southern Imagination Foundation
Terri Herubin
The Agricultural Society of S.C.

\$500 TO \$999

Addlestone International Corp
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David Sluter
Erik Glaser
Grassroots Wine
Hook, LLC
Jennifer Murray
NICO Oysters + Seafood
Pat Sullivan
Patrick Wolfe
Susan Pearlstine
Ted's Butcherblock
Tideline CPA Group LLC



2021 Community Business Academy Instruction Teams

2021

HIGH LEVEL MEMBERS

CATALYST

Estelle Colored Glass
Greystar
Motley Rice LLC
All Good Industries - Taco Boy & Wiki Wiki Sandbar
First Reliance Bank
Sonitrol Security Systems
The Indigo Road
HLA, Inc.
Limehouse Produce
Ruth's House Event Rentals & Design
REV Federal Credit Union
Grassroots Wine
Steen Enterprises
South Carolina Federal Credit Union
Charleston Music Hall

CHAMPION

RCB Development
Lava Salon
Brackish
Bridge Commercial
Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission
South Carolina Stingrays
Cru Catering
Lennon Construction Company
Cru Cafe
The Beach Company
Carnes Crossroads
Verde
Taco Boy
Croghan's Jewel Box
David Thompson Architect, LLC

FIG Restaurant
Wills Massalon & Allen LLC
Dockery's
The Agricultural Society of S.C.
CT Lowndes and Company
Home Telecom
Iola Modern
Rhodes Boutique
The Urban Electric Company
Wonder Works
The Ordinary
Digital-Ignite
Holy City Brewing
The Ordinary
The Urban Electric Company
Verde
Wills Massalon & Allen LLC
Wonder Works

2021

OUR TEAM

Thank you to our 2021 Board of Directors and staff for their leadership and support.

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Terri Herubin - <i>Chair</i>	Jessica Slaughter - <i>Secretary</i>	Charles McLendon
Nicki Root - <i>Past Chair</i>	Kerri Chisolm	Katherine Perrin
David Bennett - <i>Vice Chair</i>	Justin Ferira	Jeff Plotner
Melonie Hammond-Trace - <i>Treasurer</i>	Stephanie Hall	
	Andy McCarthy	

2021 STAFF

Jordan Amaker	Lydia Dodd	Raquel Padgett
Maud Bentley	Steve Fletcher	Jocelyn Patterson
Jacquie Berger	Lauren Gellatly	Barbie Schreiner
CT Burton	Erika Grimes	Kaylee Schuh



Looking ahead to 2022

Whether it's a pandemic, hurricane or economic downturns, 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 have no doubt that 2022 will bring more of these challenges and give us the opportunity to provide more of these creative solutions.

Most notably we feel optimistic about the following:

- Amplifying our public awareness campaigns to ensure they continue to have the greatest impact and reach possible for our members' benefit.
- Continuing to safely gather with our members and supporters in person, bringing back the preferred formats for our two annual signature events, the Good Business Summit and Chef's Potluck.
- Expanding our Good Enterprises Initiative to provide entrepreneur training and support to the communities that need it the most in Goose Creek and Bluffton.
- Introducing the Credit to Capital Program to our Good Enterprises Initiative participants who are ready to rebuild or repair their credit or learn how to access the funds needed to launch or grow their business.
- Working alongside our elected officials to ensure the unique needs of our local economy remain forefront.
- Introducing new partnerships and programming to the Local Works Coworking Space.



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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:

LOWCOUNTRYLOCALFIRST.ORG/JOIN



Support and grow the movement with
your dollars:

LOWCOUNTRYLOCALFIRST.ORG/DONATE



Stay informed and keep the conversation
moving forward. Sign up for the e-newslet-
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phone's camera

PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE