Toward a More Sustainable Future in Greater Philadelphia

SBN'S 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Sustainable Business Network
of Greater Philadelphia

OVERVIEW

2022 brought many changes for the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia (SBN). Like many of our valued business members, we continued to struggle with the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than retract or reduce our programming efforts and the benefits that our members deeply value, SBN doubled down on these areas.

We created new connections with stakeholders within our region's business community, reduced our membership prices so that joining our community is more accessible than before, and expanded our programming to bring new opportunities directly to our members. From our growing staff and board to the launch of new programs and partnerships, each change helped to evolve our organization. Yet, our greatest strength continues to be our community — businesses in our network who are committed to using their work as a force for good to build a more equitable and resilient local economy in our region.

This report highlights the progress that SBN continues to make in building a just, green, and thriving local economy in Greater Philadelphia.

"***No one can change the world alone.*** It has to be a collaborative enterprise. There has to be a lot of experimenting, trial and error, vision, and connection. None of us can reinvent the wheel by ourselves, and nobody can do this alone. SBN is the one organization that really loves to facilitate that."

STEPHANIE JACKSON, PRINCIPAL OF PRACTICAL SANCTUARY

ABOUT SBN

The Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia is building a just, green, and thriving economy. We empower the region's diverse independent businesses to do well by doing good; we advance industries critical to a vibrant, equitable, and climate resilient economy; and we advocate for an economic ecosystem that centers on localism, serves community needs, shares wealth, and protects the environment.

SBN's members are local independent businesses that practice — and measure success by — the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit. Our programming educates business owners about financially, socially, and environmentally responsible best practices; facilitates honest and supportive discussions among peers; and provides important opportunities for civic dialogue. Our advocacy focuses on solutions that advance our mission and members' interests.

Since our founding in 2001, SBN has remained the region's only membership and advocacy organization playing the important role of serving Greater Philadelphia's independent values-driven business community.

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Audre Lorde, the world-renowned Black feminist and activist, delivered these words before a conference in 1979. As I reflect on my first year at SBN, I'm reminded of the relevance of Lorde's message and what it means for the future of our organization.

At SBN, we seek a just, green, and thriving local economy for all. As we strive to overcome the impacts of the social, economic, political, and public health crises of the last few years, we cannot return to the "business as usual" of pre-pandemic life. The previous years underscored just how critical local businesses are to our economy and the support the need to survive and remain sustainable. Amid many pivots and quick changes, our local business community undertook herculean efforts to innovate, survive, and thrive.

We are inspired by our community members. To affect true and lasting systemic change, we must rethink our approach to achieving our mission. For SBN, this starts with deepening our roots in the communities we serve and expanding our table to accommodate all who wishes to sit with us. But, it doesn't end there. We must reimagine systems that have deprioritized and destabilized our communities and environmental health. We do so in cooperation with our member businesses and institutional partners because, for businesses today, sustainability is no longer an option. Instead, it's a necessity for our collective survival. We're honored to be working alongside the businesses we serve to forge a new path ahead, providing resources, funding, education, and a true community for our members. As I close out my first year with SBN, I look forward to deepening our partnership and reimaging a better future with you.

Kind regards,

DEVI RAMKISSOON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SBN'S 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

With new leadership and renewed organizational direction, SBN made an intentional and concerted effort in 2022 to create programming that focuses on the needs of local businesses in our region and deepens our roots in the communities we serve. More than ever, the work we are doing is grounded in the lived experiences, traditions, and challenges of communities that our social, political, and economic systems have long overlooked. Two major initiatives are the cornerstone of this work. First, we established a Diverse Scholarship Fund to enable business owners from underserved communities who were severely impacted by the pandemic to receive resources, services, and support from SBN. Second, we launched our Institutional Partnerships with the recognition that our community is more impactful when we work together with like-minded partners. The organizations and businesses we have chosen to partner with help amplify our message and deliver thousands of dollars of value to our community.

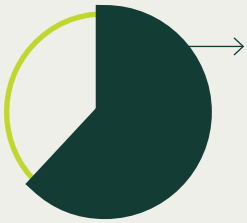
In March 2022, SBN returned to in-person programming after a two-year hiatus. Our programming and events focused on supporting the diverse needs of our business members while navigating the new realities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, all while providing vital in-person networking and connection opportunities to our members. Programs and events included workshops with legal experts on equitable employment practices, roundtable discussions with policymakers on how businesses can best position themselves to receive funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), as well as the return of our member open houses. This highly valuable program allows businesses in our network and beyond to connect with one another while exploring members' sustainability sustainable practices. We also launched a new program, our Sustainable & Local Tour series, which connects local consumers and visitors directly to small, values-driven businesses in key business corridors throughout the region. Finally, in December, we held our first in-person holiday party in three years at Triple Bottom Brewing.

In addition to the programs highlighted above, we also expanded our work in core industries within the green stormwater infrastructure, clean energy, and local food systems sectors. In this manner, SBN provided programming, resources, and support for our members to access critical financing to achieve their sustainable goals.

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR EFFORTS IN 2022 INCLUDE:

Hosted 20+ programs & events

110 Total Members



62% of our members are women-owned, LGBTQ+-owned, minority-owned, and/or immigrant-owned businesses.

Established 7 Institutional Partnerships

PHOTO GALLERY

*"**SBN provided a safe and active forum for me to find information and support that kept me moving forward in the early days of the pandemic.** That was a time of such fear and uncertainty, and it was so valuable to know that SBN was our advocate, cutting through all the noise and making sure we were tapping into the resources that could keep our businesses afloat."*

TESS HART, COFOUNDER AND CO-OWNER OF TRIPLE BOTTOM BREWING

SUPPORTING LOCAL INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES TO GROW AND THRIVE

Throughout our 20+ year history, SBN has supported our local business community to build profitable enterprises that serve community needs, share wealth, and protect the environment. In 2022, we developed tailor-made programming and events, education, advocacy, and community building opportunities to support business owners to support their operational and sustainable growth.

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

- Returned to in-person programs and events, hosting 20+ activities that included workshops, panel discussions, and member open houses.
- Launched a new program series in August 2022, Sustainable & Local Tour, connecting consumers directly to small, values-driven businesses in key business corridors throughout the region. The tour also educated consumers about the diverse approaches to sustainability. The first tour was in Fishtown, featuring several businesses from SBN's network.

ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

- Signed on to joint letters to state legislators in support of Pennsylvania joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).
- Participated in statewide calls to advance clean energy initiatives.
- Obtained resources for our members to navigate funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

MEMBERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Reduced and flattened our membership fee structure, thereby making membership more accessible than ever before.
- Increased our benefits to our members through free or low-cost programming, more networking opportunities via in-person activities, and access to financing.

Attendees at the 2022 Excellence in GSI Awards on April 21, 2022

ADVANCING CLIMATE RESILIENCY THROUGH INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

To amplify the impact of a triple-bottom-line economy that empowers local businesses to make systemic change, we've identified three industries that are making a significant impact on increasing climate resiliency: water, food, and energy. In 2022, SBN continued work within the green stormwater infrastructure and clean energy sectors and launched our Local Food Systems Initiative.

Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Partnership Highlights

SBN's GSI Partners regularly convened local businesses in the region in the GSI industry through programming, advocacy, and community-building opportunities.

- Throughout 2022, GSI Partners held four quarterly meetings both virtually & in person. Meetings were hosted by members Rodriguez Consulting, LLC and OLIN Studio and allowed partners within the industry to learn about new developments and advances and network with colleagues within the sector.
- For the first time in over two years, SBN hosted the Excellence in GSI Awards held on April 21 at FringeArts & La Peg in Philadelphia, PA. Approximately 80 GSI professionals and friends of the industry attended the ceremony & reception.
- Alex Cupo, GSI Partners Manager, shared our recent report, GSI: A Tool for Economic Growth & Recovery in PA, which assesses the industry's growth and provides recommendations for expansion and improvements at various conferences and symposiums locally and statewide.

Other Highlights

- In partnership with the Energy Foundation, we supported and advocated for our membership's clean energy priorities that support local business growth and development in our region.
- In the fall of 2022, SBN launched its Local Food Systems Initiative, which focuses on strengthening local supply chains, reducing waste, and supporting regenerative agricultural practices.

EXTENDING OUR IMPACT

To be an effective resource for the thousands of local, independent, and values-driven businesses throughout Greater Philadelphia, SBN prioritized expanding our reach within the communities that we serve. In 2022, we made significant progress in providing valuable resources and opportunities through our newly established Diverse Scholarship Fund, the launch of our institutional partnerships with local, state, and national entities, SBN's 401k plan, and directly connecting our members with financing opportunities.

Diverse Scholarship Fund

Through our Diverse Scholarship Fund, we have been able to serve two pillar businesses in our community. Our first two scholarship recipients this year were Trunc and Kitchen Garden Series.

Photo courtesy of Dorothea Gamble and Dagmar Mitchell, cofounders and owners of Trunc.

Launch of Our Institutional Partnerships

Our Institutional Partnerships leverage nearly $10,000 in resources and other benefits to our members, including free access to apply to Investors Circle through the American Sustainable Business Network, free business consulting services, and access to tools and resources to calculate their carbon footprint. To date, we have established seven local and national institutional partnerships that include:

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

- AMERICAN SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK
- CONSULT FOR AMERICA
- CIRCULAR PHILADELPHIA
- CENTER CITY BUSINESS ASSOCIATION
- CARBON NEUTRAL CLUB
- ASIAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA
- THE MERCHANTS FUND

SBN's 401k Retirement Plan

Working with our partner, Entrust Financial, SBN's 401k retirement plans allows business owners and their employees to put money into funds that invest capital back into our local economy and were specifically curated with the mission and values of the triple bottom line in mind.

Financing and Scholarship Opportunities

SBN was able to distribute nearly $1,000 in scholarships and connected our members with thousands of dollars of financing opportunities this year.

MEET OUR NEW STAFF

This year, SBN welcomed two new staff members and celebrated the promotion of a deserving team member.

DEVI RAMKISSOON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SBN's new Executive Director, Devi Ramkissoon, started with us in February 2022. Devi comes to SBN with 15+ years of experience in international development, specializing in working with sustainable businesses for economic growth and poverty reduction. An immigrant and social entrepreneur herself, Devi has worked tirelessly to advance the work of small businesses from underrepresented communities across Latin America, Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East. For nearly the past decade at USAID, she led multimillion dollar food security, environment, and private sector development projects around the world, managed the Agency's premier knowledge-sharing platform for market development, and advanced the US Government's sustainable development goals at multiple international market development fora. She has won numerous awards from the US Government and the private sector for her leadership navigating global humanitarian crises.

JARED MICHAEL LOWE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

This year, we celebrated Jared Lowe's new role with our organization as Associate Director. After joining SBN more than two years ago as a Communications Manager, Jared's strong leadership skills, commitment to SBN's mission and values, and service to our membership earned him a promotion to the Associate Director role. Prior to joining SBN, Jared served in a variety of roles at the University of Pennsylvania, WHYY, Temple University, and other organizations throughout Greater Philadelphia.

REBECCA NICHOLS FRANQUI PROGRAM AND MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

Rebecca Nichols Franqui, our new Program and Membership Coordinator, began August 2022. Before joining SBN, Rebecca spent several years working with her family's small business, pursuing its mission to be a more sustainability-minded member of the Philadelphia community. She helped enhance their commitment to sustainability through partnerships with like-minded businesses, engagement with community members, organizations, and civic associations, and company branding on recycling bins and reusable bags. Her previous experience includes working for her university's sustainability department, spreading awareness for recycling e-waste, and as a programs coordinator for Habitat for Humanity of Burlington and Mercer Counties.

LOOKING AHEAD

2022 marked the beginning of our local business community's comeback which included many pivots and changes, with SBN evolving to better meet the needs of sustainable businesses throughout our region. Through it all, SBN was able to provide more offerings like ever before – charting a new path for sustainability in our region rooted in localism, climate resilience, and equity.

Looking forward, SBN anticipates meeting the needs of local, independent, values-driven businesses in our region by offering more tailor-made programming, effective advocacy, community-building opportunities, and financing to help support businesses in our region to grow and thrive.

THANK YOU

SBN thanks our sponsors for making our programming and opportunities this year possible.

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SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA'S STAFF

DEVI RAMKISSOON
Executive Director

JARED MICHAEL LOWE
Associate Director

ALEX CUPO
GSI Partners Manager

REBECCA NICHOLS FRANQUI
Program and Membership Coordinator

Guests attend SBN's Open House at Perrystead Dairy in July 2022

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