THE BRONX SMALL BUSINESS FIELD GUIDE FOR ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For decades, Bronxites have faced challenges that pushed our neighborhoods to the brink. Our hustle, organizing, and creativity brought the Bronx back: we created community-owned workplaces, land, and housing, and pushed our government to invest in rebuilding.

Now, the work and the people that together brought back our neighborhoods—and the value that we created—are at risk, both because of the disruption of COVID-19 and from displacement pressures on our neighborhoods and small businesses.

The Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative was created by community leaders and organizers from across the Bronx to take their decades of organizing and community work to the next level, and foster catalytic and structural change in the Bronx economy towards shared wealth and control for poor and working class Bronxites.

Inspired by and drawing from our own history in the Bronx and examples of democratic community economies from around the US and the world, we are working to create a Bronx community and economy with economic democracy at the center.

Economic democracy can disrupt the Bronx’s history of wealth extraction from poor communities, people of color, and women to create an economy that invests in human dignity, fosters community well-being, stability and safety, and supports movements for equality, democracy, and freedom.

Economic democracy will position Bronx residents and businesses as the collective decision-makers and owners of our borough’s future.
In this field guide for small businesses, we outline a set of tools and frameworks for a fair and just recovery, strong and resilient Bronx businesses, and a better Bronx business climate, including:

• **Curated articles and examples from the real world** on how economic democracy, employee and worker ownership, and high-road businesses are creating strong and sustainable small businesses, and more equitable regions in the process.

• **A sensible framework for Bronx businesses** to shift their internal processes and work collaboratively as you recover from COVID. The framework supports businesses to work together better internally, chart a pathway to sustainability, achieve scale, access financing, grow market access, and advocate for smarter policies and regulations that support your business and those like yours.

• **Establishing clear value propositions for “high-road” business models, and shared ownership and solidarity networks.** Centering democracy, shared ownership, and equity makes businesses stronger, more successful and resilient over time. This is true both for making changes in existing businesses and for businesses that are just starting up and laying the groundwork for the future.

• **Principles for cooperative enterprise and economic democracy,** and why it matters for us in the Bronx.

• **How you can get involved** and work with us.
OUR FRAMEWORK FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND ENTERPRISES FOR ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

A Road Map For This Guide