

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



**Sustainable Business Network
of Massachusetts**

Building Local, Green, and Fair Economies



ABOUT SBN

SBN was founded in 1988 as **the nation's first business trade association** with a mission of making business a vehicle for social, environmental, and economic change. Since then, SBN and our partners have raised the bar for what's expected from the business community.

By building a movement of small and mid-sized businesses and partners who share our mission to grow an economy that is **local, green, and fair**, we're creating a vibrant, caring community and a sustainable future for **all people and all living things**.



LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR



laury hammel

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The past two years, 2020 and 2021, were the most challenging for local businesses throughout the US as millions of local businesses around the nation were forced to close their doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the help of financial aid from the federal government, and the resilience of local businesses and their stakeholders, our economy is gradually returning to what we now know as the 'New Normal'. Fortunately, more and more businesses are returning to profitability, many of whom are experiencing robust growth. It appears that the darkest hours of the pandemic are behind us as our local and national economy moves through this recovery phase. During this dramatic upheaval of our economy, the Sustainable

Business Network of Massachusetts (SBN) partnered with several local and national nonprofit organizations to play a leading role in helping local businesses and nonprofits obtain financing. We succeeded in connecting hundreds of businesses with state and local grants, the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), and the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC), which made a big difference to businesses in the extended SBN ecosystem of locally owned businesses.

As a primarily event-driven organization, we experienced several disruptive challenges as well. We were able to overcome these challenges thanks to the support of all of our stakeholders (Board, staff, members, partners, and friends), and have worked to re-invent our programs and business plan. We are very grateful for the support we have received that has enabled us to grow our programs and increase our impact on our local economy during this time. This report summarizes in a few words the essence of what SBN has accomplished in 2021, and completes the third year of our now completed Strategic Plan.

We are currently crafting a new three-year strategic plan, and look forward to connecting with our stakeholders to determine what current and new directions SBN will take next. As we commit ourselves to continually cultivating a diverse and strong local business ecosystem that works for racial justice and equity; builds the local economy; and supports mitigation and adaptation of the climate crisis, we invite you to join us in changing our world for the better in 2022.

INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

SBN's Strategic Plan for 2019-2021 Includes Four Strategic Initiatives that Integrate Local, Green, and Fair:

1. Collaborate with SBN Partners to Build a Fair and Equitable economy
2. Support Local Food Entrepreneurs and Strengthen the Local Food System
3. Preserve and Expand the Local Business Ecosystem
4. Grow the Green Economy

These strategic initiatives are exemplified through our educational workshops, mobilization efforts, trade events, conferences, campaigns, and programs.



FAIR INITIATIVES

Strategic Initiative #1: Ally with partners to build a fair, diverse, equitable, and inclusive local economy

Since its formation, SBN has striven to put fairness and justice at the center of all of our work. Our 2019-2021 organizational strategic plan formally agreed to prioritize racial equity throughout our programming. In the years since, our team and board have been both inspired and driven to create programs, such as our Annual Conferences, that include as many diverse voices as possible in order to shed light on how we can work together to create a more inclusive and racially equitable economy. Following the racial reckoning during the summer of 2020, SBN thoughtfully contemplated our role in the fight to dismantle systemic racism and became more committed than ever to continually demand racial equity.

21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge



In April, **Food Solutions New England (FSNE)** hosted its seventh 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge in which thousands of people annually commit time and focus to deepen their learning and understanding; to engage in conversation and inquiry; and explore and create collaborative approaches to confronting racism in our food system for 21 days and beyond. This year, SBN staff, interns, and board members participated in the Challenge, and met weekly for a conversation facilitated by Karen Spiller, SBN Board member and co-leader of the Challenge to reflect upon key learnings, feelings, and thoughts and to chart a course of action to dismantle racism and build pathways to equity and justice for all.

Step into the Challenge: Building A Culture of Equity in One's Business Workshop

Presented by SBN Board member, Karen Spiller, this workshop focused on how core values that include equity, racial equity within our businesses build and contribute to the culture of the brand not only for its customers yet also for its employees. Tools and strategies were shared, and a discussion ensued around the contributions of unexpected outcomes and opportunities that have emerged.



Cambridge-Somerville Black Business Network (CSBBN)



In partnership with Cambridge Local First, SBN launched the Cambridge-Somerville Black Business Network in August 2020. Facilitated by Nicola Williams of The Williams Agency, the Network brings together Black entrepreneurs and identifies specific programs that can be developed or adopted that will help ensure these businesses survive the pandemic and thrive moving forward. This initiative convenes and works with Black-owned businesses based in Cambridge and Somerville that are in at least one of these phases: 1) Start-Up 2) Expansion 3) Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

CSBBN grew substantially in 2021 in terms of membership, partnerships, and programming. Highlights from the past year include:

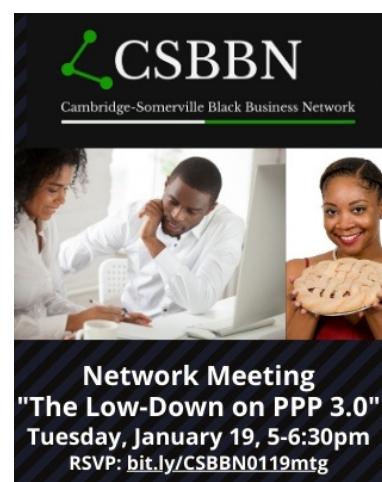
- 35 total member businesses
- Held 8 network meetings
- Created a Resource Matrix to connect members with accelerator and mentorship programs
- Partnered with several business leaders, banks, and organizations to provide workshops, webinars, and other resources to members
- Met with representatives from the Cities of Cambridge and Somerville to discuss support for Black businesses
- Began development of an equity fund with a statewide organization to increase the number of Black-owned businesses in Cambridge, Somerville, and MA
- Launched the Passport to Black-Owned Businesses Event Series to increase community member interactions and awareness of local Black-owned businesses. The first two events were held in August for National Black Business Month and in November on Small Business Saturday
- Secured a capacity building grant from the Cambridge Community Foundation



CSBBN facilitator Nicola Williams participating in August's Passport to Black-Owned Business Event at member Great Eastern Vintage



March Network Meeting with Cambridge City Manager Louis DePasquale



January Network Meeting featuring a webinar on the Payroll Protection Program

BOSTON LOCAL FOOD PROGRAM

Strategic Initiative #2: Support Local Food Entrepreneurs and Strengthen the Local Food System



This program strives to create a vibrant local food system, ensuring accessibility of healthy food for people of all demographics and economic backgrounds by:

- supporting the development of a network of local food producers, farmers, crafter brewers, restaurants, and retailers through events and workshops;
- educating the general public about the local food system and the benefits of supporting local agriculture and local fisheries.

We are proud to say that the Boston Local Food Program is entering its second decade of work. This program would not be possible without the support of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, and the USDA.

SBN is a member of the Massachusetts Coalition for Local Food and Farms (MCLFF). MCLFF is an alliance of regionally-based nonprofit 'Buy Local' organizations that together serve all communities in the state. Our statewide network provides critical support to Massachusetts farmers and fishermen, strengthening the local economy, preserving active working lands and waters, and making fresh, local food more available to all members of our communities.



EAT LOCAL MA MOBILE APP

After a successful pilot launch of the Eat Local MA Mobile App in 2020, we partnered with other Buy Local organizations to expand this resource to the whole state, for the whole year. This App provides consumers with a map and directory of over 1600 restaurants, farms, and retailers state-wide. Just enter your address and be connected instantly. By providing consumers with a centralized platform to access local, healthy, and sustainably raised food, The Eat Local MA App provides food businesses with targeted tool to reach their focused consumer base. In 2022, we will be enhancing this platform and promoting it to a wider audience to grow the accessibility of healthy local food for all.



Graphic used to promote the Eat Local MA Mobile App.

EAT LOCAL MONTH EVENTS

In addition to the rollout of the Eat Local MA Mobile App, Eat Local Month included a variety of in-person and remote programmatic activities. While the Boston Local Food team advocates for folks to eat locally and seasonally whenever possible, August is an especially important time for this effort in Massachusetts.

This year we partnered with Eastie Farms to host an urban farm tour at their Sumner Street and Sam Adams Elementary School locations. An additional urban farm tour was planned with ReVision Urban Farm in Dorchester, but was moved to a virtual format due to weather. This allowed for a more in-depth interview with Farm Manager, Todd Sandstrum.

Finally, SBN was able to resume the in-person film screening at the Brattle Theatre. This year's program included three short films: The Need to GROW, Green Crabs in the Great Marsh, and Estrellita (Little Star). We look forward to being able to continue this tradition in the future as a way to reflect on our regional food system and engage with other industries.



Stills from ReVision Urban Farm Tour Video.



Todd Sandstrum
Farm Manager, Victory Programs ReVision Urban Farm

BOSTON LOCAL FOOD FESTIVAL

On September 19th, about 40,000 people came together in the heart of Boston on the Rose Kennedy Greenway for the 11th Annual Boston Local Food Festival. With a cool sun overhead, Boston celebrated almost 60 food producers who bring character and freshness to New England's thriving food culture. The festival featured the "New England Village", the "Family Fun Zone", and a cornucopia of hidden delights, as budding entrepreneurs showcased their culinary inspirations.

The eagerly anticipated festival was brought back for its 11th year, having taken a break in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the ultimate goal of providing access to Healthy Food for All, SBN hosts the festival to grow support for local food, aiming to reach the "50 by '60" goal of having at least 50% of all food consumed in New England be locally sourced by 2060. Also, nearly 90% of the waste produced by this event was either recycled or composted and all the electricity was off-set.



Photos of guests and staff at the Festival.



LOCAL FOOD TRADE SHOW

The Local Food & Specialty Crop Trade Show is business-to-business event connecting the best of New England's food producers with the food buyers who care the most. In this dynamic setting farmers, chefs, food manufacturers, hospitals, schools, distributors, caterers, and retailers come together for sales meetings, consultations, and workshops. 2021 marked our first year hosting this event virtually and we successfully featured over 80 local food producers to almost 120 food buyers. We're looking forward to another great show in 2022.

LOCAL FOOD SPEED TRADING



The Local Food Speed Trading is an extension of the Local Food Trade Show in which SBN strategically matches local food buyers and producers from quick succession sales meetings. This year's event was highly successful, providing over 30 food producers with direct advise from the area's leading local food purchasers. The matchmaking style of business-to-business relationship building is something that has proven success and we will be expanding in 2022.

LOCAL INITIATIVES

Strategic Initiative #3: Preserving and Expanding the Local Business Ecosystem

SBN was the first organization of businesses in the U.S. committed to a sustainable economy focusing on the sustainable bottom line of community, environment, and justice. SBN continues to bring together local businesses and allied nonprofits who are committed to creating vibrant communities and promoting local economies throughout MA, New England, and the nation.

2021 Sustainable Business of the Year Awards Virtual Celebration

The Sixth Annual Sustainable Business of the Year Awards Celebration featured incredible live stories of our local business Awardees. Our small business community came together to celebrate and reflect over music, poetry, and active and thought-provoking discussion. Most importantly, we were joined by NPR's Robin Young who interviewed 7 leading Massachusetts businesses committed to racial justice and sustainable business practices.

SBN and NPR's Robin Young celebrated the 2021 Sustainable Business Awardees virtually on January 27, 2022!



The Best Bees Company



The Williams Agency



American Vinegar Works



Debra's Natural Gourmet



Select Energy



Boing! Toy Shop



Astarte Farm

Employee Ownership Webinar

Organized by the Massachusetts Center for Employee Ownership (MassCEO), SBN and Cambridge Local First sponsored a webinar for business owners and workers to learn about employee ownership and state-funded resources. The webinar featured experts from MassCEO and representatives from SBN member Real Pickles and CERO Cooperative.

explore

EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP

Generating value for owners, workers, and communities

CAMBRIDGE LOCAL FIRST

SBN

APRIL 1
2 - 3 PM EST

CAMBRIDGE LOCAL FIRST



AMERICAN
SUSTAINABLE
BUSINESS
COUNCIL



Local First and National Partnerships

SBN has always partnered with Local First Networks in MA including CLF, Waltham Local First, and JP Local First. Since 2020, SBN has co-partnered and participated in the Resilient Local Economy Internship Program with CLF, AMIBA, and other local and national partners.

Employee Retention Tax Credit Workshop

To assist small business owners and nonprofits, SBN and Cambridge Local First organized the a workshop that featured business leaders who had succeeded in applying to and being approved for the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) and offered suggestions and connections to support organizations.



Shop Indie Local Campaign

SBN, along with partner organizations, promoted and facilitated AMIBA's year-round Shop Indie Local Season Campaign that celebrates locally owned businesses and works to increase spending at these businesses. As part of this initiative, SBN, CLF and the CSBBN organized the "Passport to Black-Owned Businesses event in celebration of Small Business Saturday.

SBN Conference Keynotes on Common Good Podcast

SBN partnered with event partner, Common Good Collective, to produce two podcast episodes on the Common Good podcast that captured some spectacular keynote conversations from our 31st Annual Conference held in June 2021.



SBN Website Launch

We're excited to have launched our brand new website, showcasing SBN's Programming, and Member map and directory. Check us out at [www.sbnmass.org!](http://www.sbnmass.org)

GREEN INITIATIVES

Strategic Initiative #4: Growing the Green Economy

Like no other time since the last Ice Age, life on Earth is threatened by a major climate change, coupled with other damages to the environmental destruction at all levels. This crisis is a result of dangerous practices by businesses, governments, individuals, and the global economy.

SBN sees itself as a dynamic force bringing together small and midsize businesses to adopt and promote sustainable business practices. SBN's pioneering program, the Sustainable Business Leader Program (SBLP), has been a major promoter of reducing carbon emissions into the environment by commerce.

Sustainable Business Leader Program

This program is the most comprehensive Small Business Green Certification Program in the US. In addition to certification, the program provides technical assistance and supports locally owned and independent businesses in greening their operations and practices, reducing their carbon footprint, and saving money.



Congratulations to Gemline on their SBLP Certification with us in 2021!

This year, we'd like to highlight **Gemline/ Gem Group Inc.**, a promotional products supplier in Lawrence, that exceeded expectations on sustainability in their office, warehouse, manufacturing, products, and policies, in what was a difficult year for businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gemline began installation of a solar panel system on their facility's roof on December 31, 2021, as per the recommendation of our SBLP lead. Besides their ongoing sustainability work, Gemline took action to keep their employees safe and their business stable.



Gemline's manufacturing floor. Spaced for social distancing



Uplifting the Solar Energy Industry



Select Energy installed solar panels installed on the roofs of the Longfellow Tennis & Health Club in Wayland, MA

SBN has long been a promoter of solar energy as a major source of renewable energy that, by itself, can make a dramatic reduction of carbon in almost every nation throughout the world. SBN is proud to have several solar energy companies as our members, and we have collaborated with local businesses to install solar panels whenever and wherever possible.

In the Spring of 2021 SBN convened a coalition of business leaders and organizations committed to making a major increase in solar energy everywhere possible in the Commonwealth. The impetus for this convening was Governor Baker's goal to have 50% of MA energy to come from renewable resources by 2030. While this is, no doubt, an admirable goal, our Coalition noticed that there didn't seem to be a plan for how this objective could be achieved by the slated year.

The coalition included SBN, the American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN), the Solar Energy Business Association of New England (SEBANE), Solect Energy, and Sunbug Solar. While our proposal was developed in 2021, we are in the process of implementing this plan that aims to amplify and uplift the solar energy industry and massively aid in achieving 50% of MA energy from renewable resources by 2030.



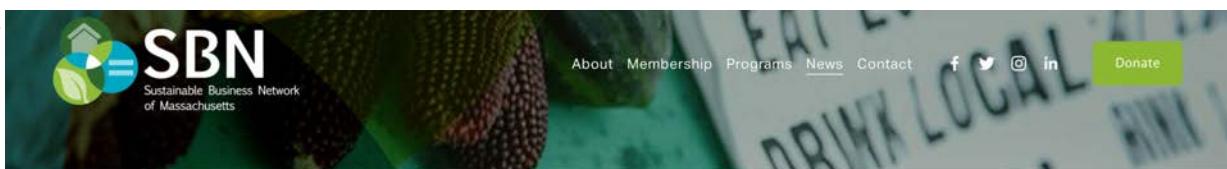
SBN Joins MassDEP's Solid Waste Advisory Committee



MassDEP created the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) to advise the agency on the development and implementation of solid waste programs, including the waste reduction strategies and policies established in the MassDEP Solid Waste Master Plan. Achieving these goals will require strong partnerships, collaboration, and active participation from all stakeholders affected by solid waste and materials management. SBN and its members will play an important role in bringing the views of forward-thinking local businesses to SWAC discussions.

SBN Environmental Reports

With the help of our Resilient Local Economy Interns, SBN produced two substantive research reports: "*Business As it Relates to Water Pollution and Environmental Justice in Massachusetts*", and "*Business As it Relates to Air Pollution and Environmental Justice in Massachusetts*" to share with the business network and community. A few SBN members were highlighted in these reports to showcase the positive impact that such local businesses can have on their surrounding communities and ecology.



A compilation of reports on green businesses, environmental stewardship, and sustainable business practices.

[Business as it Relates to Water Pollution & Environmental Justice in Massachusetts - August 13, 2021](#)

By Audrey Smith

[Sustainability during COVID-19 and SBLP Certified Gentle Giant Moving Company - April 13, 2021](#)

[Business as it Relates to Air Pollution and Environmental Justice in Massachusetts - April 28, 2021](#)

By Gabrielle Emerson and Shashwat Shekar

[Why Be Green? A Quick Guide to Sustainability - July 23, 2020](#)

By Madeleine R. Michael

31ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE



We Thank Our Keynote Speakers



Winona LaDuke

Internationally-renowned environmentalist activist
Program Director
Honor the Earth

We had the distinct honor and pleasure of welcoming a diverse array of inspiring change makers and leaders in our community at SBN's 31st Annual Conference on June 4. With five inspiring keynotes, seven breakout sessions with thirteen outstanding speakers, and two energizing emcees, our local leaders spoke on a range of topics including building equity, expanding the use of solar energy in Massachusetts, and the need to break up monopolies.

Though the gathering was virtual this year, our sense of community and commitment to action was strong. We'd like to thank our keynotes, breakout speakers, emcees, and sponsors for their partnership and collaboration as we continue the work to strengthen our local economy movement.

A Commitment to Individual and Collaborative Action in Strengthening our Local, Green, and Fair Movement

Read a few of the commitments that attendees made when prompted with the questions, "What promise are you willing to make?" and "What is the price you are willing to pay to make this promise?"

"I promise to stay engaged in helping to change narratives to change culture to change systems."

"As journalist, I commit to continue to cover sustainability and climate issues with nuance and complexity."

"I commit to educating myself on local organizations so I can learn how to leverage my privilege and knowledge for social good/change."

"I commit to help more BIPOC business become employee-owned!"



Rosario Ubiera-Minaya

Executive Director
Amplify Latinx



Segun Idowu
Executive Director
Black Economic Council of Massachusetts (BECMA)



Niaz Dorry
Coordinating Director
North Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA)



Shirley Leung
Business Columnist
The Boston Globe

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