



Annual Report

2023

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BCC leadership and key partners tour the Brooklyn Navy Yard (2023)

Brooklyn Communities Collaborative envisions a Brooklyn where all communities are healthy, economically sound, culturally vibrant, and civically engaged.

www.brooklyncommunities.org

Executive Director's Letter

Dear Partners,

As I reflect on 2023, I am excited by the progress that Brooklyn Communities Collaborative (BCC) has made and the opportunities that lie ahead. Over the past year, team BCC has advanced our mission to empower communities and engage partners to develop and implement innovative strategies that address complex systemic challenges. Through research, convening, and incubation, BCC is making strides in our core priority areas: strengthening communities, developing a healthy built environment, growing the local workforce, and diversifying the local supply chain.

In 2023, we founded a Brooklyn Enterprise Advisory Council made up of community members and leaders and released our seventh participatory action research (PAR) report, "Research with Black Entrepreneurs and Business Owners in East and Central Brooklyn", implemented our first Community Health Worker training pilot focusing on employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals, and offered technical and capacity-building support to small, local, community-based nonprofit partners. In addition to new and continued programs throughout Brooklyn, we built upon our last four years as an organization to hone our message and sharpen our strategic priorities.

Looking ahead to 2024, I see opportunities for us to advance health equity in Brooklyn, in addition to expanding our priority areas with new workforce development and grant programs, incubating creative solutions to local business challenges, and driving investment in Brooklyn. In a historic investment, New York State has approved a new health equity-focused 1115 Medicaid Waiver that significantly invests in addressing health-related social needs, building a care ecosystem that meets patients where they are, and directing individuals to health and social care providers in their communities. BCC is preparing to support these efforts, while continuing to identify gaps in access and coordinate solutions for all Brooklynites with health-related social needs. BCC has been at the forefront of connecting health and social care for the past four years, and we look forward to this new chapter of advancing health equity alongside new and current partners.

As you read about our progress in 2023, know that it is your support and engagement that make the BCC vision a reality.

In Partnership,



Shari Suchoff, Executive Director

Diversifying the Local Supply Chain

One way that BCC addresses systemic disinvestment in Brooklyn is by redirecting the healthcare supply chain to circulate more dollars locally and invest them in neighborhoods challenged by structural economic inequality. BCC bridges the gap between hospital supply chains and local minority- and women-owned businesses and enterprises (MWBEs) through research, raising awareness, education, training, and convening.

Empowering Black Businesses Through Participatory Action Research

BCC released its most recent participatory action research (PAR) report "[Research with Black Entrepreneurs and Business Owners in East and Central Brooklyn](#)," in collaboration with the Department of Planning and Policy at Hunter College, CUNY. The researchers designed the study to assess Black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs' assets, needs, and priorities in four Brooklyn neighborhoods - Bedford Stuyvesant, Brownsville, Canarsie, and East New York.

The team then conducted interviews, compiled information on key demographic and economic indicators, and proposed community-driven solutions to the issues identified by participating local minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBEs) in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, Canarsie, and East New York.



Research Design



32 Black business owners interviewed

574 total MWBE businesses in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brownsville, Canarsie, and East New York



9 key research informants

Represented organizations that work on the ground with businesses and entrepreneurs in the focus neighborhoods



15 student entrepreneurs

Participated in a focus group discussing entrepreneurship, community, and business operations in Brooklyn



Partners and PAR researchers gather to discuss findings from the “Research with Black Entrepreneurs and Business Owners in East and Central Brooklyn” at the Brownsville Community Culinary Center (2023)

Key Findings

Frequently cited business challenges included business development and management, accessing technical assistance, business planning support, personnel, and certification.

74% of the business owners interviewed reported being MWBE certified at either the City or State level – yet most business owners had not received any contracts as certified MWBEs

50% of the MWBE businesses registered with New York City and owned by Black entrepreneurs are concentrated in professional services and construction



Health Enterprise Advisory Council

Following the release of the “Research with Black Entrepreneurs and Business Owners in East and Central Brooklyn” PAR report, BCC formed the Health Enterprise Advisory Council, which gathers the insight and knowledge of local organizations, leaders, and entrepreneurs to implement the report’s recommendations to localize and diversify procurement in Brooklyn.

The Council’s inaugural members are:

Tokunbo Anifalaje, Director, Brooklyn Business Center, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation
Nancy Carin, Executive Director, Business Opportunity Center Network (BOCNet)
Warren Goodridge, Brooklyn Cooperative Federal Credit Union
Bernell Grier, Executive Director, IMPACCT Brooklyn
Oma Hollaway, Chief Operating Officer, Bridge Street Development Corporation
Tiera Mack, Executive Director, Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District
Franklyn Mena, Co-Founder & Executive Director, UniverseCity
Colette Pean, Executive Director, East New York Restoration Local Development Corporation

In addition to providing crucial insights and connections with local businesses, the Health Enterprise Advisory Council is working with BCC staff to develop *The Guide to Doing Business with Brooklyn’s Anchor Institutions*.



Members of the Health Enterprise Advisory Council (2023)

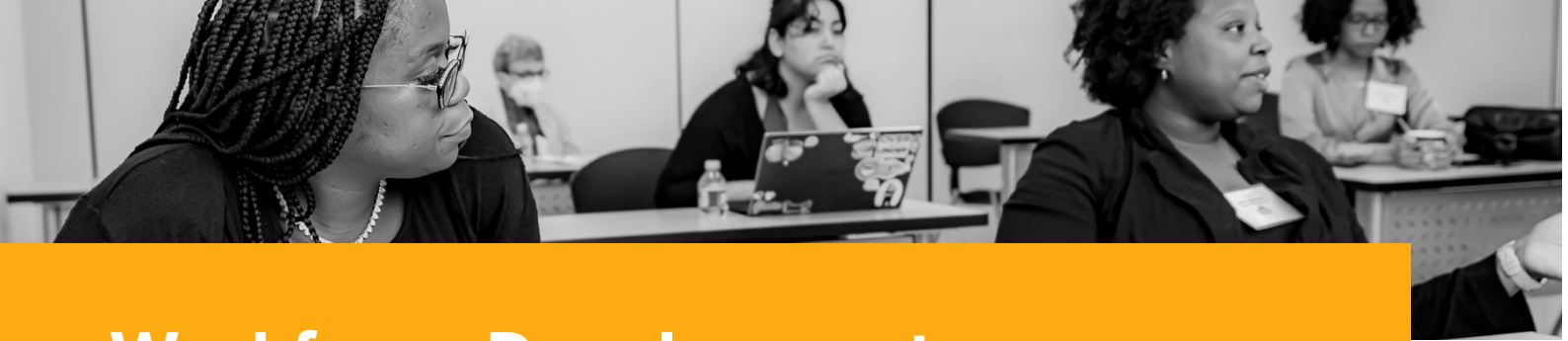
Forging Ongoing Procurement Partnerships

In collaboration with Maimonides Health and One Brooklyn Health procurement leads, BCC is working towards a localized and diversified healthcare procurement pipeline. Through efforts to increase hospital procurement contracts with local MWBEs, BCC redirects the supply chain so that more dollars circulate locally and are invested in neighborhoods facing structural economic inequality.

Procurement Partner Spotlight MAIMONIDES HEALTH AND HIBISCUS FLOWERSHOP

BCC matched Hibiscus Flower Shop, a locally owned MWBE, with Maimonides Health to update and maintain the greenery of the main buildings across the hospital campus. The collaboration is ongoing, and has expanded to include additional locations around the campus. Hibiscus not only improved the aesthetic appeal of the hospital but contributed to the overall functionality of the space. The success of this collaboration highlights the benefits of investing in MWBEs and fostering stronger relationships with local businesses.





Workforce Development

BCC creates workforce development programs in collaboration with healthcare, education and labor partners. Relying on strong partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) to recruit from high-need communities, BCC is working to address shortages by filling urgently needed healthcare positions.

Community Health Worker Training

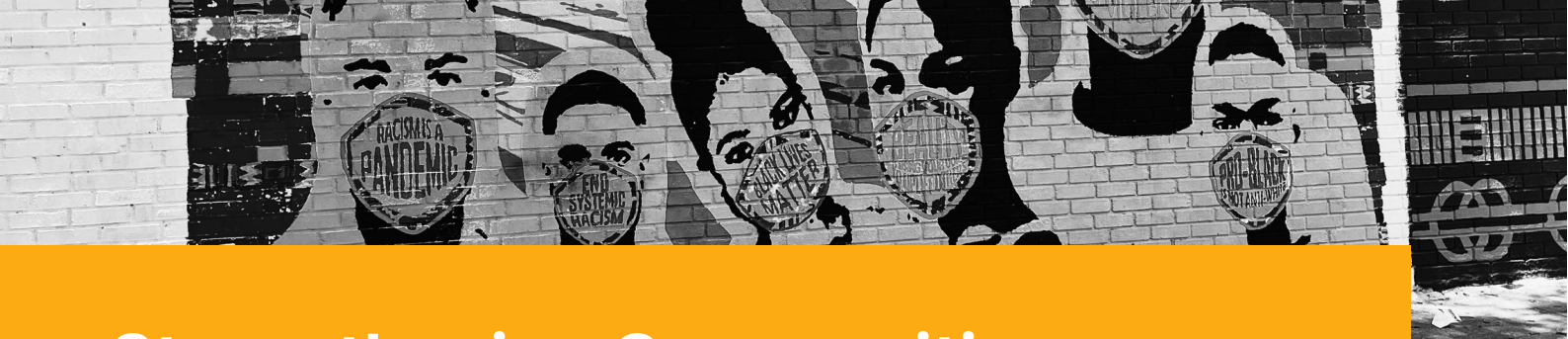
As part of BCC's Advancing Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals (AOFI) program, supported by a grant from Affinity Legacy, Inc., BCC launched its inaugural Community Health Worker (CHW) training pilot program.



Participants speak at the BCC Community Health Worker Training pilot program graduation ceremony (2023)

Designed to support formerly incarcerated individuals ages 18-45 from Brownsville and East New York in their re-entry and re-integration, the program also aimed to strengthen the local healthcare workforce through training and skill development. The CHW training program was offered in partnership with Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation and Kingsborough Community College.

On November 16, 2023, BCC celebrated the graduation of 18 participants. The newly certified CHWs received resume and interview support, job placement assistance, and regular career guidance after graduation. Early placement efforts have been highly successful and will continue into 2024.



Strengthening Communities

BCC mobilizes a strategic network of community partners dedicated to achieving health and wealth equity in Brooklyn. As a convener and idea builder, BCC brings together community leaders, organizations, and policymakers to identify and address some of the most pressing issues facing the borough while fostering meaningful partnerships and working relationships.

Central to BCC's strengthening communities work is the Strong Communities Fund (SCF), a proven participatory grantmaking system designed to fund and strengthen the small, community-led nonprofit organizations that are on the ground in communities addressing issues of health and wealth equity head-on.

Building a System of Social Care Screening and Providers

BCC partner Community Care of Brooklyn (CCB) launched its CCB Navigator program in 2022 to connect Brooklynites with a network of community-based social, behavioral, and medical care services and programs.

BCC facilitated connections between its CBO partners and CCB and provided onboarding support to the CCB Navigator platform, allowing participating organizations to receive referrals from sources including emergency rooms, inpatient and outpatient settings, as well as directly from Brooklyn residents.

26 Community-based organizations enrolled in the CCB Navigator Program

402 Clients received CCB Navigator services

678 Referrals to social care services including food assistance, housing and shelter support, and benefits navigation

Convening Communities, Building Civic Infrastructure

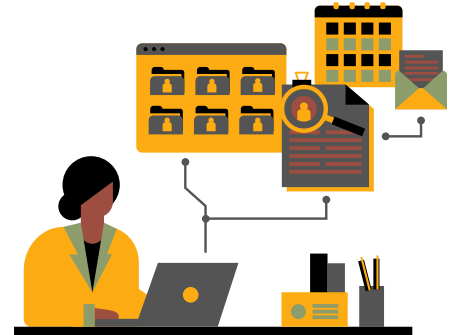
CBO partners often cite networking with other local organizations and creating a sense of community as a core need. In 2023, BCC hosted over 25 community meetings and discussions, and facilitated three recurring workgroups: the Community Action and Advocacy Workgroup (CAAW), East Brooklyn Call to Action, and the Enterprise Advisory Council.



Clockwise from top left: members of East Brooklyn Call to Action (2); Community Health Worker trainees; Brooklyn Health Enterprise research convening (2)

Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program

Many of BCC’s community-based partners report needing technical assistance, grant application resources, and capacity-building support as they work towards their organization’s mission. Resilia, a Black female-founded tech company, helps these organizations strengthen capacity and amplify their work with micro-learning courses, resources and templates, storytelling exercises, leadership development, and more.



BCC continued its partnership with Resilia to provide a cohort of almost 30 partner organizations with access to the platform and opportunities to further their skills and community impact. Participants reported an enhanced ability to manage strategic and programmatic needs, including:

- Strategic planning,
- Leadership skill building,
- Needs assessments and coaching calls,
- Online trainings,
- Social media content creation,
- Templates for download and other technical support materials .

Participant Spotlight QUALITAS OF LIFE

“The Resilia platform has strengthened soft skills among the Qualitas of Life team and expedited processes. For example, we recently worked on a grant proposal application and needed to provide some commitment letters. We found templates on the platform that helped us accelerate the process of reaching our partners and [allowed us to] focus on the proposal's narrative. For a small team like ours, saving time and streamlining processes directly impact the use of resources effectively.”

Establishing a Brooklyn Maternal Health Program

The maternal and infant health crisis is urgent in Brooklyn, with rates of maternal and child mortality in many Central and East Brooklyn neighborhoods ranking among the worst in the country.



As part of efforts to address this crisis, BCC hosted a roundtable discussion on "Integrating Community-Based Social and Mental Health Supports to Improve Maternal and Child Health," in partnership with Brooklyn Perinatal Network Inc. and the Brooklyn Coalition for Health Equity for Women and Families. The discussion centered on the importance of mental health throughout the life of mothers, the benefits of case management support through Community Health Workers, and the need for collaboration to improve the health outcomes of both mothers and children. More than 30 participants contributed their experiences and knowledge to the conversation.

In late 2023, BCC received support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Building Local Alignment Initiative to launch the BCC Maternal Health Grant Program. The community-driven re-granting program will provide BCC Strong Communities Fund grants to existing health and wellness programs that work to improve engagement and education of adolescents and young adults and offer pre- and inter-conception care. This collaboration between BCC and the Building Local Alignment Initiative supports and empowers local CBOs in their ongoing efforts to improve key health outcomes in their communities.

Acknowledgments

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U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Representative Yvette Clarke
U.S. Representative Hakeem Jeffries

BCC also extends thanks to the partners, supporters, and team members working towards a healthier and more equitable future in Brooklyn- without whom none of this would be possible.



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