

Inner City Capital Connections

2017 | IMPACT REPORT

ICCC
INNER CITY CAPITAL CONNECTIONS

ICIC
Initiative for a Competitive Inner City

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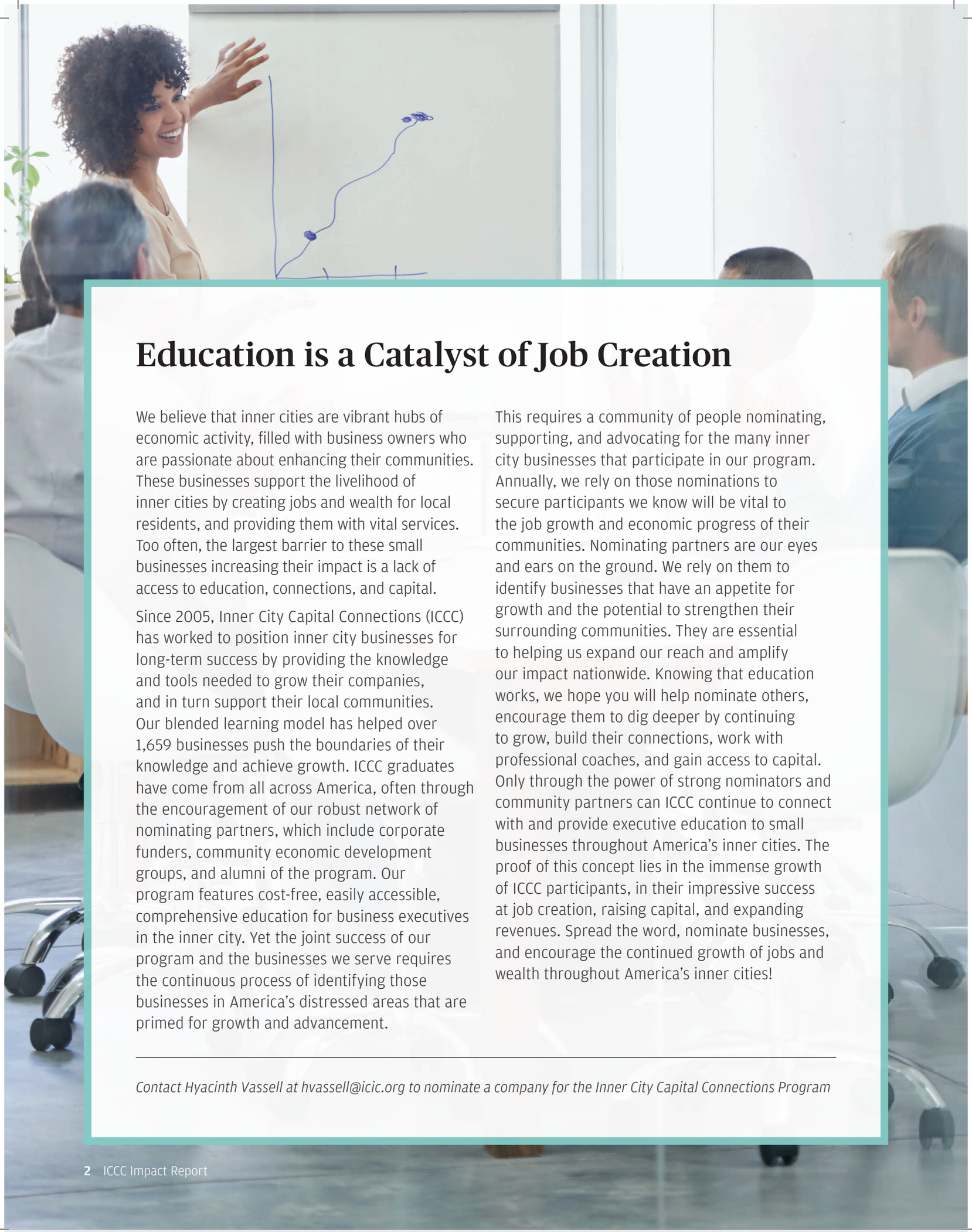
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Education is a Catalyst of Job Creation

We believe that inner cities are vibrant hubs of economic activity, filled with business owners who are passionate about enhancing their communities. These businesses support the livelihood of inner cities by creating jobs and wealth for local residents, and providing them with vital services. Too often, the largest barrier to these small businesses increasing their impact is a lack of access to education, connections, and capital.

Since 2005, Inner City Capital Connections (ICCC) has worked to position inner city businesses for long-term success by providing the knowledge and tools needed to grow their companies, and in turn support their local communities. Our blended learning model has helped over 1,659 businesses push the boundaries of their knowledge and achieve growth. ICCC graduates have come from all across America, often through the encouragement of our robust network of nominating partners, which include corporate funders, community economic development groups, and alumni of the program. Our program features cost-free, easily accessible, comprehensive education for business executives in the inner city. Yet the joint success of our program and the businesses we serve requires the continuous process of identifying those businesses in America's distressed areas that are primed for growth and advancement.

This requires a community of people nominating, supporting, and advocating for the many inner city businesses that participate in our program. Annually, we rely on those nominations to secure participants we know will be vital to the job growth and economic progress of their communities. Nominating partners are our eyes and ears on the ground. We rely on them to identify businesses that have an appetite for growth and the potential to strengthen their surrounding communities. They are essential to helping us expand our reach and amplify our impact nationwide. Knowing that education works, we hope you will help nominate others, encourage them to dig deeper by continuing to grow, build their connections, work with professional coaches, and gain access to capital. Only through the power of strong nominators and community partners can ICCC continue to connect with and provide executive education to small businesses throughout America's inner cities. The proof of this concept lies in the immense growth of ICCC participants, in their impressive success at job creation, raising capital, and expanding revenues. Spread the word, nominate businesses, and encourage the continued growth of jobs and wealth throughout America's inner cities!

Contact Hyacinth Vassell at hvassell@icic.org to nominate a company for the Inner City Capital Connections Program

Impact Summary

The goal of Inner City Capital Connections is to position small businesses for growth and success by helping them develop and practice skills that enable them to grow, create jobs and raise capital. The program is proven to strengthen not only the businesses, but also the inner-city communities where they operate. ICCC achieves this with a multifaceted approach that includes educational seminars and webinars, as well as one-on-one coaching, and access to capital providers.

Since 2005, ICCC has worked with 1,659 businesses from 476 communities and 45 states. The unique design of the program has allowed businesses from numerous industries to participate and receive knowledge and skills specific to their industries. Of the 1,659 businesses, 41% are women-owned and 65% are minority-owned, two groups with larger barriers to business resources and obtaining capital than their counterparts. In total, ICCC graduates have created 15,946 jobs, providing vital employment and stimulating growth in distressed economies.

New ICCC Participants by Year



1,659
businesses trained

$4.1M
average revenue

16
average age of business

25
average full-time employees

15,946
jobs created

59%
new jobs paid above $40,000

78%
plan to increase staff in 2018

172%
average revenue growth

$1,471,346,048
total capital raised

Ethnicity and Gender



43% African American
9% Asian
33% White
1% Native American
12% Latino
2% Other

41% Women *59% Men*

Industry Breakdown



Impact of ICCC Education

60%
improved growth plan

76%
improved talent management and team building

82%
improved understanding of capital

> 75%
report higher than average knowledge of business topics after participation

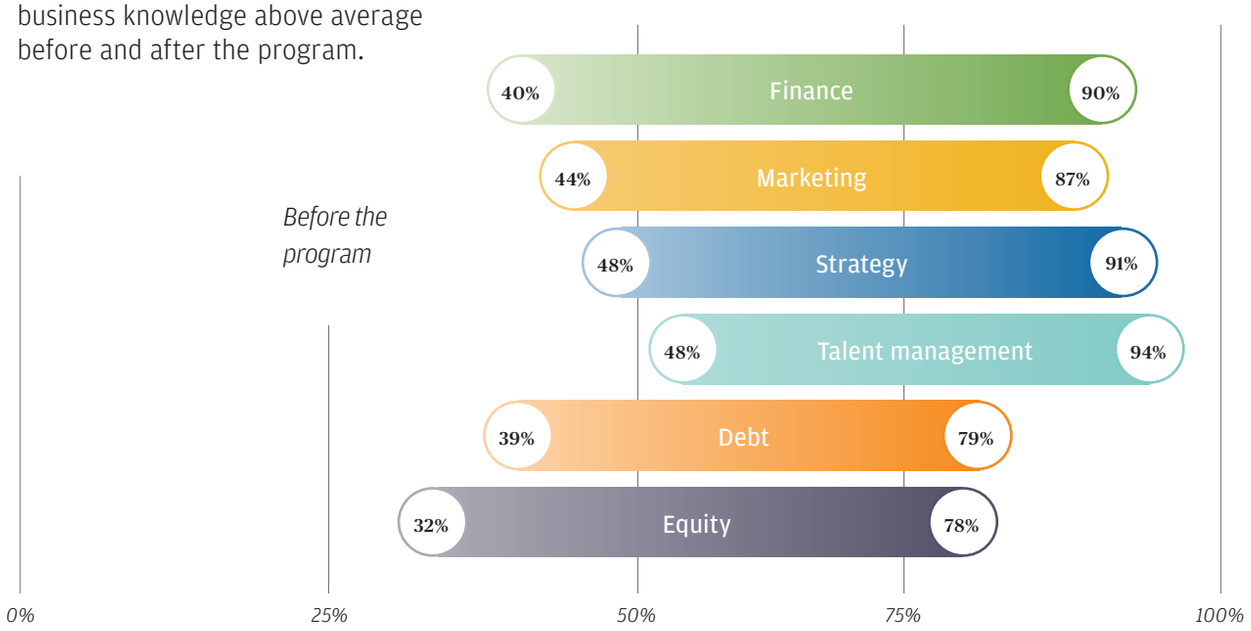
ICCC strives to ensure inner city businesses achieve success, thrive, and support their local economies. Despite a CEO's desire to seek executive education and understand its benefits, running a business demands endless time and attention, which means these aspirations often get put on the back burner. To accommodate busy executives, ICCC provides concise yet effective learning opportunities through multiple mediums, giving participants maximum flexibility and impact. In return, those businesses provide services, affect economic activity, and create jobs in their local community. In this way, ICCC has been able to transform lives and inner city communities.

Over a decade of work, ICCC has found that businesses with capital, connections, capacity-building, and coaching are poised for growth, advancement, and success. With knowledge and confidence, owners can grow their businesses in ways they perhaps previously found unimaginable. ICCC participants exemplify the extraordinary power and impact of people with knowledge to transform lives and communities within America's distressed communities.

Many businesses report they are not actively seeking capital before participating in ICCC, but after completing the program 25% of those businesses went on to raise capital. As a group, ICCC alumni have raised nearly $1.5 billion in capital since 2005. One of the largest barriers to those businesses was knowledge about access to capital. ICCC provided an opportunity to challenge their preconceived notions. ICCC executives acquire new knowledge, expand their network, and gain a new perspective on their business, which contributes to their growth and success.

Educational Impact of Business Topics

Percent of participants who rated their business knowledge above average before and after the program.



Design and Impact of ICCC

Inner City Capital Connections (ICCC) is an Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) program that positions inner-city businesses for long-term success. It's designed for busy executives of all expertise levels, and its impact is proven to strengthen businesses and the inner-city communities where they operate.

Our participants hail from:

476
communities

45
states

Each year ICCC works with hundreds of businesses through seminars, webinars, coaching sessions, and a culminating conference. This model is highly adaptable to the needs of businesses that may be seeking capital, learning how to managing change, enhance strategy, or those simply pursuing more knowledge.

Qualifications:

Be an independent for-profit or not-for-profit corporation, partnership or proprietorship

Meet one of the following requirements:

- **Have its headquarters or more than 51% of its physical operations located in an economically-distressed area**
- **Have more than 40% of employees residing in an economically-distressed area**

Have been in operation for two years or more. ICCC does not accept start-up companies*

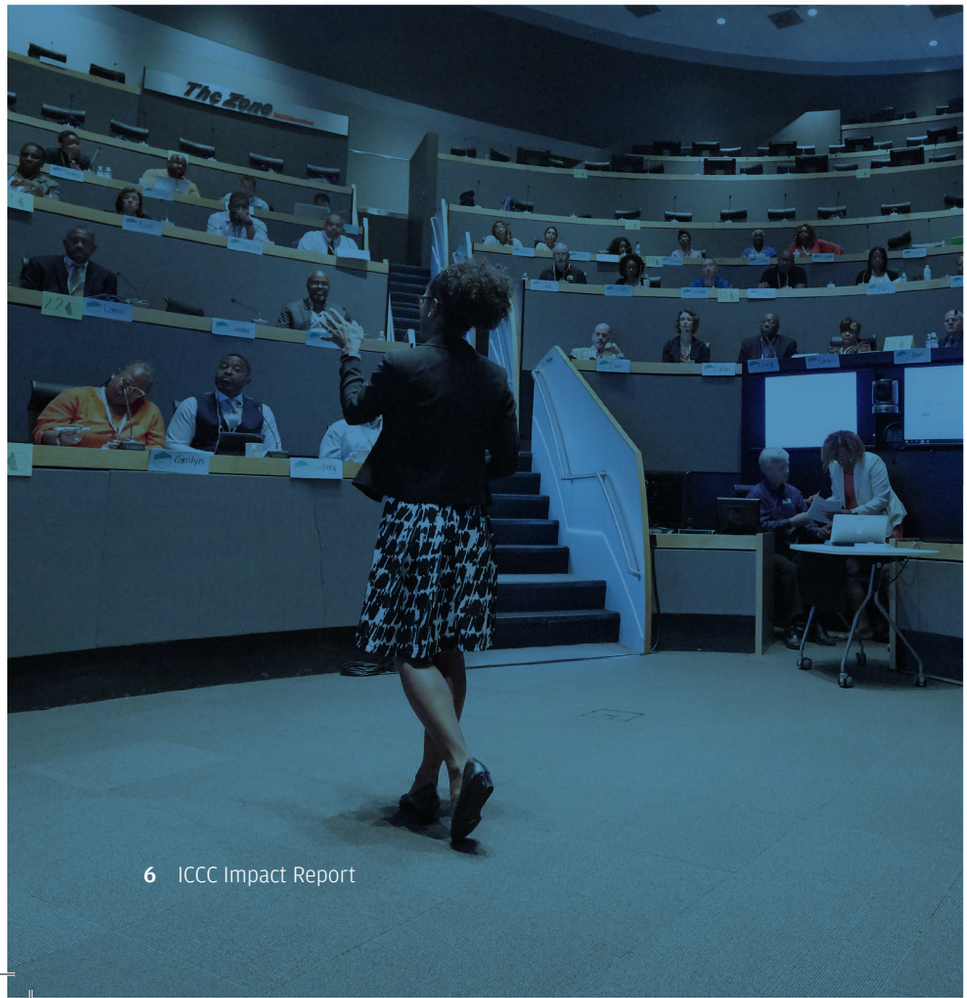
In 2016, ICCC hosted kickoff seminars in eight cities across the country for 579 businesses, bringing the participation total to 1,659 businesses since 2005. The value of the program has brought 164 of those participants back multiple times to continue their education and grow their networks. ICCC alumni average revenue growth of 172%, which has led to an average 44% growth in employees. In total, ICCC alumni have raised $1,471,346,048 in capital. Given the gaps in access to capital for women-owned and minority-owned businesses, the jump in average capital raised by women and minority ICCC participants post-program demonstrates the invaluable knowledge gained by those participants.

*On a case-by-case basis, ICCC will consider businesses that do not meet all of the specified criteria on the recommendation of a nominator.






INNER CITY
CAPITAL


The Zone






National Conference
The program culminates with a national conference in New York City where participants put their learning to practice. They hear from experts and can showcase their business on the national stage. Participants will exit the program with practical knowledge, a robust network and a plethora of capital connections from which to draw.
Opening Seminar
Every year, ICCC executive education begins with a full-day seminar. Participants engage in discussions with professors and experienced practitioners from top institutions. These sessions set the foundation for the rest of the program.
Webinars
Several virtual sessions complement and deepen what participants learn at the opening seminar. Webinars are taught by experienced practitioners and cover topics that are customized to growth challenges of the cohort. These accommodate a busy schedule so participants can listen from the office, at home, or on the road.
Coaching
At the opening seminar, a group coaching session helps participants begin to tackle the challenges that prohibit their growth. A virtual coaching session in October gives them more individualized feedback and guides them through developing custom solutions to position their business for long-term success.

Our Participants Say...

"Great organization – solid panel speakers, very engaging!"

"My ICCC coach helped me gain clarity on how to elaborate on our competitive advantage and differentiate for growth."

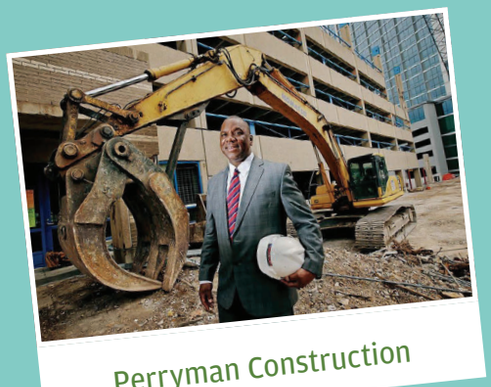
"From the first seminar to NYC and the online coaching my confidence has grown."

"Made great connections. It was informative and well planned!"

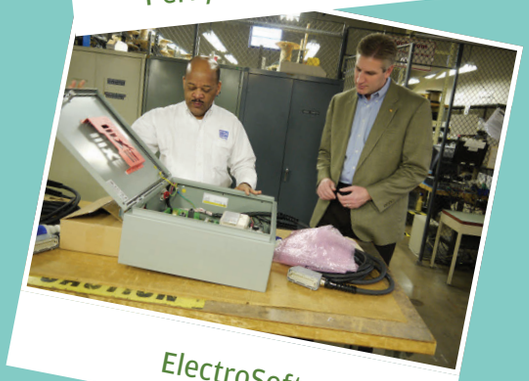


Valente Yeast

"Easily one of the best programs for entrepreneurs period."



Perryman Construction



ElectroSoft

"Each session inspired me to go to the next step. Overall, the experience was greatly appreciated."

"Tremendous experience! Going away with a renewed energy and commitment – thank you!"

"Thanks for putting this together. Excellent content and immediately actionable. Very much appreciated."

"Overall my coach was awesome. He took the time to let me know what areas were strong and which ones needed tweaking to strengthen."

"10 out of 10. This far exceeded my expectations."

"Phenomenal program and incredibly grateful to be able to participate."



Boston Organics



Trice Construction



Gadberry Construction



Parkway Bakery



Guma Spicy Pies



Giroux Glass



Tremendous Maid

Local Job Creation by ICCC Alumni (2005-2016)

Since ICCC our participants have experienced:

172%
average total revenue growth

44%
average full-time employee growth

59%
new jobs paid above $40,000

$1,471,346,048
total capital raised

In one year since ICCC, the 2016 cohort has:

63%
average total change in revenue

$25M
total capital raised

337
jobs created




210 Lawrence
379 Boston
1136 Detroit
285 Plymouth
350 Yonkers
244 Brooklyn
266 Trenton
235 Bronx
1300 New York
247 Philadelphia
935 Chicago
401 Washington D.C.
223 Baltimore
274 Memphis
170 Dallas/
Fort Worth
166 Atlanta
229 San Angelo
130 New Orleans
1205 Miami

Women-Owned

669
total women-owned businesses

219
are certified Women's Business Enterprises (WBE)

63%
average total revenue growth experienced by WBEs since ICCC

1,453
jobs created by certified WBEs since ICCC

$221M
capital raised by WBEs since ICCC

The role of women in business, especially in executive roles, has grown immensely, yet women are still a vastly underrepresented group in leadership. Nationally, women-owned businesses represent only 36% of total businesses. Certifications such as the Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) help bridge the gap in underrepresentation by assisting those companies in accessing and obtaining new business. ICCC supplements WBE programs by providing further assistance to women-owned businesses. Of ICCC alumni, 41% are women-owned, and of that number 219 are certified WBEs. ICCC has compounded representation of underrepresented groups with 63% of WBEs also certified Minority Business Enterprises (MBE). By providing further education and access to capital for WBEs, ICCC helps overcome historical difficulties in accessing capital experienced by women business owners, especially minority women. Certified WBEs have used the ICCC program knowledge to grow their businesses in terms of employment, revenue, and capital, thus further enabling women entrepreneurs to realize their full potential.



WOMEN-OWNED

A silk glove can make a difference

113% revenue growth since ICCC



Kim Heathcott, CEO, Clarion Security

Clarion Security CEO Kim Heathcott is the first to admit that the security industry isn't a particularly flashy or easy market. The work is urgent and intricate and being a woman-owned business in a largely male-dominated industry has often added another complex layer to navigate. Kim's professional background is in asset management, and she had no prior experience owning a business, or working in security. However, her husband previously had invested in acquiring and merging of two small security companies, and she wanted to rebuild the model with a fresh approach. Kim conducted market research, determined that Memphis was a strong market, and re-entered the workforce as a business owner.

The learning curve was steep for Kim. However, she distinguished herself in a crowded landscape. Many of her more experienced competitors were not open to new ideas and had static business practices. Kim made a concerted effort to employ the best practices and technologies to continue to grow her company.

When Kim first participated in ICCC, her revenues were steadily increasing and she had successfully secured loans to further grow the company, but she worried that she was overextended. She felt that despite Clarion Security's growth, capital providers weren't giving it fair value. The first ICCC seminar she attended was incredibly informative and gave her a comprehensive overview on alternative types of financing and how to chart a strategy to position the company for long-term growth. She worked with her ICCC coach to craft and refine a strategy that ultimately provided a working capital boost, but not through an investment that would have diluted her ownership.

Kim credits ICCC with giving her a more open and imaginative mind. After completing the program, she invested in technologies to make Clarion Security more attractive to larger customers and drive customer satisfaction, recently earning her the honor of "Women's Business Owner of the Year" from the National Association of Women Business Owners. Kim's desire to continue her executive education has encouraged her to participate in ICCC multiple times. Each time, Kim has challenged herself and her company to continue growing and pushing the industry to new heights.

"The program took me back to my core process."

Kim Heathcott, CEO, Clarion Security



Clarion Security Employee



WOMEN-OWNED



A new option in convenience and healthy eating

When she founded Locali in 2009, Melissa Rosen already had a wealth of experience in both the food service industry and entrepreneurship. She had worked in the food industry as a waitress and also started her own café in her twenties. After she completed graduate school, Melissa worked for several years as a counselor in a hospital, where she noticed that many communities did not have access to healthy food. She eventually decided that she wanted to launch Locali, a hybrid convenience store and deli that provided affordable, healthy food.

While the concept was wildly popular, Melissa and her business partner faced initial skepticism. When they opened their first location in downtown Los Angeles, they were advised to start smaller and test the market with a food truck. She made a concerted effort to distinguish her brand by investing in the healthiest possible ingredients and providing her customers and employees with high standards of consistency and respect. Locali is health-focused at heart, and while Melissa has incorporated some of the prevailing industry trends into her business, she has never compromised her initial business model.

Melissa first participated in ICCC with the goal of connecting with an angel or private equity investors. She found the education was most beneficial to her long-term strategy and goals. She had participated in other business growth programs, but ICCC stood out for its condensed timeline and the advanced information it provided. The opportunity to have frank conversations with investors and other business owners was also incredibly useful in helping her develop a long-term vision for her business. At ICCC's culminating conference, Locali was among the companies selected to present to the entire audience. Having the opportunity to watch her business partner present on the company's behalf and receive feedback was invaluable.

As a direct result of the connections she made, Melissa was able to secure a loan to finance opening a new location and is planning to continue to grow aggressively. The health food industry is continuing to expand rapidly, and through Locali, Melissa wants to continue to be an advocate for the benefits and importance of healthy eating.

WOMEN-OWNED

Fashionable jons

49% revenue growth since ICCC



Monica Brown, CEO, Sarabia's



Monica and team

Monica Brown does not fit the conventional mold of a successful CEO in the sanitation industry, but Sarabia's Portable Jons does not fit the conventional mold of a successful sanitation business.

Monica was born and raised in Mexico City, where she had 25 years of experience in the fashion industry. When she moved to California in the early 2000's, she obtained a work permit and planned to continue in the industry. However, in 2010, she moved to El Paso to join her sister, Lorraine, who was the then-owner of Sarabia's. Initially, Monica hadn't understood why her sister – who also had a fashion background – had decided to purchase a sanitation business. But Monica opted to work at the company part-time for several years, which gave her the opportunity to learn about the industry and the company through observation, before transitioning to a full-time role.

While the sanitation industry usually connotes dirt and grime, Monica and her sister sought to revolutionize the market. Among their most popular products are trailers that includes a sink and plumbing and are rapidly becoming a mainstay at construction sites and private events in the area.

Sarabia's sales remained stagnant during Monica's first two years as CEO; she restructured her management team, and the company began to grow in subsequent years. By 2013, the business was growing steadily and did not immediately need capital, but Monica readily traveled to Atlanta to participate in ICCC for continuing education. She felt there was always more to learn about being an executive. At ICCC, she gained a comprehensive overview about sustainable business practices, insight on how to effectively present her company to outside stakeholders, and knowledge on how be a more effective and empowering leader and to highlight her competitive advantage. Monica has gained knowledge at ICCC that encouraged her to expand the company's market, launch a waste disposal program, and empower her growing number of employees.

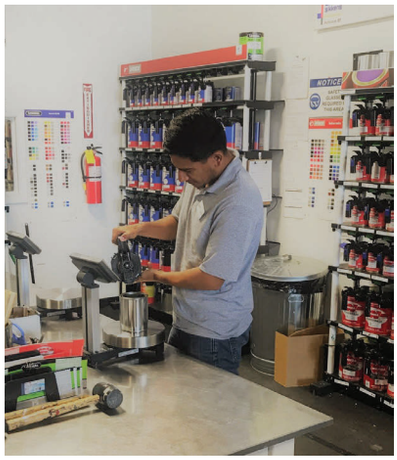


WOMEN-OWNED

Family values lead to customer satisfaction

12% employee growth in one year since ICCC





UYL facilities

Yen Hoang has always been acutely aware of the flaws in the automotive collision repair industry. As a child, her father, who owned an automotive shop, was perpetually frustrated by the lack of customer service and care in the industry. In 2005, he decided to create an auto body paint supply shop that offered a standard of care that he himself had never experienced. Yen's brother, who has a degree in chemical engineering, joined the business and immediately applied his analytical and technical skills to the production process, quickly adding value to their customers. Yen worked at an accounting firm for 10 years before joining the family business full-time.

UYL, which supplies automotive and industrial paint to collision repair and fleet manufacturers, filled a clear need in the automotive collision repair industry and was rewarded. Yen, who had no experience owning a business, working professionally with family, or selling paint, took it as an opportunity to learn. However, her limited background in entrepreneurship left the family desiring some executive education and outside counsel, leading them to ICCC in 2016.

As UYL continued to expand, Yen wanted to ensure that the company was positioned for healthy and long-term growth. She had a degree in finance, but she wanted to pursue formal training in business finance as it related to growth. Yen took full advantage of the program and forged relationships with the debt and equity panelists at the first educational seminar, as well as with her coach. Having access to a wealth of ICCC professional advisors with in-depth knowledge of strategy and management has been a priceless resource as UYL continues to scale.

The need for customer service in the automotive collision repair industry that Yen's father identified decades ago continues to be relevant, keeping UYL and its standard of care in high demand. As Yen and her family prepare the company for the next stage of growth, they have continued to keep in contact with their ICCC coaches and returned to the program in 2017. Their commitment to excellence and continuous education has allowed UYL to land larger contracts and leverage growth in the heart of Texas.

Minority-Owned

1078
total minority-owned businesses

2,898
jobs created by MBEs since ICCC

358
are certified Minority Business Enterprises (MBE)

$860M
capital raised by MBEs since ICCC

161%
average total revenue growth experienced by MBEs since ICCC

Minority groups are underrepresented in business leadership roles in the United States, with minorities constituting 39% of the population, but only 29% of total business owners. Certifications such as the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) complement ICCC by assisting minority business owners in helping them access and attain new contract opportunities. Sixty-five percent of ICCC alumni are minority-owned businesses, reflecting immense potential for bridging the gaps in education and access to capital that MBEs face. Of the total ICCC minority-owned businesses, 358 are certified as MBEs. Importantly, 63% of ICCC certified Women Business Enterprises are also MBE-certified, representing a large portion of our businesses which are both women-owned and minority-owned. The ICCC education helps bridge gaps in underrepresentation by working alongside many MBEs, the result of which have been large amounts of capital raised and triple digit average revenue growth. That growth translates to good-paying job growth and increased capital within communities served by MBEs.



MINORITY-OWNED

Think bigger

150% employee growth since ICCC



BEPC, Inc. CEO Oscar Casillas has never been afraid to think bigger. He began his career at Johnson & Johnson, initially starting out in the machine shop and working his way up to become a business unit manager, with over 350 employees reporting to him. During that time, he identified a need for consulting services in the life sciences industry, and after 30 years with Johnson & Johnson, he approached the company's management team with a proposition: he wanted to transition out of his role and start his own engineering and technical consulting firm.

Oscar incorporated BEPC in 2005, with Johnson & Johnson one of his first and biggest clients. The company was initially a sole proprietorship; wary of taking on debt to acquire office space, he worked out of his home, often stacking folders on the kitchen table. Within two years, the business had grown enough for him to open a physical location.

When Oscar participated in ICCC, he had recently secured a major contract and knew that he would need capital to help fund the initial stages of the project. Although his accountant, who had been with him from the company's inception, had always warned him to be debt-free, he approached ICCC with an open mind, eager to learn more about his options for securing capital. The professors and panelists at the opening seminar gave him a comprehensive overview of debt and equity financing. Oscar also found the opportunity to network with other business owners transformative.

"The whole process was a huge learning experience for me."

Oscar Casillas, CEO, BEPC

Through his conversations at both the opening seminar and culminating conference, he learned that his aversion to debt financing was ultimately holding back his business. Oscar left ICCC confident that he had the skill set to successfully leverage any debt he acquired.

After completing ICCC, Oscar secured a loan which, coupled with BEPC, Inc.'s internal funding capacity, has enabled the company to expand its operations, employee base, and community outreach efforts. The company has received numerous accolades on the local and national levels including continuously rising placement on the Inner City 100 list. To Oscar, they simply serve as confirmation that the company is on the right track and continues to provide a level of service to their clients and employees that is unmatched in the industry. Currently, BEPC, Inc. has operations in 30 states, is registered in the United States and Mexico, and plans to continue expanding internationally. Even in the face of immense success, Oscar will continue to think bigger.



MINORITY-OWNED

Business that empowers

75% employee growth since ICCC

Yolanda Jones, CEO of YCAT-C, is driven by opportunities to make a difference. As a child, growing up in a low-income area of San Francisco, her father instilled in her a deep passion for her community. She carried that into adulthood. Acutely aware of the dearth of resources in inner cities, she stayed in the same area where she was raised so she could remain actively involved in the neighborhood. She dedicated herself to raising her son while working at a local car dealership.

In 2009, the death of her 16-year-old son, who was killed by a police officer, shattered the life she had built. Devastated and overwhelmed, she devoted her energy to searching for ways she could preserve her son's legacy. She heard that the federal government was investing heavily in infrastructure and decided to found Yolanda's Construction Administration and Traffic Control (YCAT-C), a construction management company whose employees consisted almost entirely of inner city residents. Determined to provide alternatives to gang violence and reduce unemployment in her community, she hired individuals who had criminal records, never finished school, or were on government assistance.



Yolanda Jones, CEO, YCAT-C

In large part due to Yolanda's willingness to learn, YCAT-C has achieved tremendous levels of growth since she participated in ICCC. The growth of her business has coincided with the economic growth of her city, and she wants to make sure she continues to look out for her community. To protect her community and preserve the memory of her son, Yolanda asserts, "This is where I'm rooted, this is where I'm from, these are my people, and this is what I have to do."

"This is where I am from, these are my people and this is what I have to do."

Yolanda Jones, CEO, YCAT-C

Yolanda struggled initially to master the regulations and nuances of business ownership. She actively sought out business growth programs to better position her business for success. At ICCC, she received an expert overview of business management practices she was able to implement immediately and took full advantage of the program's network of professors, practitioners, and capital providers. ICCC reaffirmed what Yolanda had always known: humility, passion, and a willingness to learn are all critical to success.

MINORITY-OWNED

Modernizing a third generation family-owned business

46% revenue growth in one year since ICCC



Caron Ng, CEO, NuSet with family photo in background

Over the course of her twenty-year career at NuSet, Caron Ng has learned the art of being flexible. She earned a degree in English in 1997 with the intention of working as a refugee translator at the United Nations. However, she was convinced by her parents to begin work at NuSet, their family business.

NuSet, a thirty-five-year-old lock manufacturing company, was started by Caron's grandparents. Despite her early reservations, Caron adjusted her plans and threw herself into the family business. She worked on the assembly line, shipped orders, sat at the customer service desk, and later assumed a leadership role. A traditional lock manufacturing brand, NuSet had worked primarily with the banking and construction industries. The recent recession hit NuSet hard, prompting Caron to adapt their marketing strategy and pursue opportunities for entrepreneurial education.

Caron dedicated herself to several local and national business growth programs, including ICCC. The trainings were informative, comprehensive, and pushed her to pursue additional opportunities for executive education. Through ICCC, she delved deeply into business strategies and practices she had not previously been exposed to. Instead of focusing solely on the logistics of NuSet's daily operation, she learned to present the company to capital providers, articulate its value, and formulate its next play.

Turning her focus to NuSet's long-term strategy meant that Caron had to reevaluate her company's growth plan. Before ICCC, NuSet had manufactured thousands of locks and had not made an effort to serve a specific niche in the market. After participating in the program, Caron modernized NuSet and directed the bulk of its resources to developing items that fit into today's IoT (Internet of Things) revolution. She sought capital for the first time and secured a loan that helped her refine the product, marking a distinct shift in NuSet's services and capabilities. As she looks forward, Caron plans to continue to develop and fine-tune products that will revolutionize the lock manufacturing industry and cement NuSet's place as a major innovator in the field.



Veteran-Owned

49
certified veteran-owned businesses

454
jobs created since ICCC

489%
average total revenue growth since ICCC

$107M
capital raised since ICCC

Veteran-owned certification supports the needs of another group of entrepreneurs that may face unique challenges when entering the business world and provides incentives for supporting those members of our community who have served in the armed forces. Veteran-owned businesses represent about 9% of all businesses in America and 6% of businesses that have completed ICCC. These businesses are important because they often serve as a source of steady well-paying jobs for American veterans. By providing further education and access to capital to veteran-owned businesses, ICCC has helped them raise large amounts of capital, increase employment, and achieve triple-digit average revenue growth. This programming has been essential to aiding businesses operated by executives reintegrating into the community after serving in the armed forces.



Nola Veazie, CEO, V-Solutions

The American dream

40% revenue growth in one year since ICCC

Nola Veazie had always dreamed of running her own business. Her mother was an entrepreneur, and growing up Nola was able to experience firsthand the value of investing in, creating, and developing a product. When Nola was 17, she and her family moved from Panama to the United States and shortly after, she joined the military and earned her college degree.

Over her twenty years in the Air Force, Nola developed a passion for mental health and substance abuse counseling. She is trained as a therapist and wanted to provide services that extend beyond those of a private practice. She developed the idea for V-Solutions, a training, consulting, and staff development firm across the mental health industry. V-Solutions easily distinguished itself from its competitors through the breadth of services it provided, but its growth was relatively modest. Nola had no formal business training before launching the company and initially struggled to develop a sustainable business plan or constructive relationships with capital providers.

Participation in ICCC transformed her views on business ownership. The program helped her develop the management and organizational skill set to put together a growth strategy. When she attended the culminating conference in New York, she had the opportunity to receive feedback on her pitch and network with a variety of debt and equity providers. Following her experience in ICCC, Nola became confident that she had the language, knowledge, and connections to navigate meetings with capital providers.

As she looks forward, Nola plans to continue to grow the business by increasing her staff and independent contractors. Nola's journey took her around the world, provided her with insights into the struggles of mental health, and yet she still believes: "It doesn't matter where you come from. Anyone who has a dream, tenacity, and faith can achieve it."

VETERAN-OWNED

Strategy is about being worthy of investment

33% employee growth since ICCC

Out of Birmingham, Alabama, veteran Jack Eyer has built a business whose name, Relax, It's Handled, inspires a second glance. Every company wants to know they can relax, knowing that certain aspects of their business are in capable hands. That's exactly how Jack Eyer has established his company: as a business that provides experienced human resources and management solutions. Relax, It's Handled is an association digital marketing and management company that works in partnership with volunteers to simplify their success in influencing and governing their trade associations.

The company Jack purchased in 2015 wasn't a well-oiled machine, but a company mired in strategy issues, perhaps biting off more than they could chew. Jack's initial goal was to rethink how to build a scalable business, ultimately to design a sustainable model. This meant establishing a predictable way of generating revenue, pruning nearly 80% of contracts that weren't profitable and diversifying their portfolio of businesses to gain greater return on investment.

Jack decided to join ICCC at the urging of a client, and once he heard Michael Porter, ICIC's founder, was involved, "that's all they needed to know". He was intrigued about the latest techniques in raising capital, but more so in how underprivileged businesses could be positioned to secure capital. Upon seeing Michael Porter's model explained, Jack realized the need to truly define a competitive advantage for his company. ICCC inspired Jack to become more vigorous about establishing a clear competitive advantage and consistently reviewing reports that validated differentiation in value from his competitors.

Since participating in ICCC, Jack has positioned his business to focus on its competitive advantages. As such, he's dedicated to continually building a mature group of advisors dedicated to growing the company. Jack hopes to be a ten-million-dollar business in the next five years, but most important he wants to "build a company worthy of having someone investing in it."



Jack Eyer, CEO, Relax, It's Handled and team

VETERAN-OWNED

Connecting the dots

104% revenue growth in one year after ICCC

Nothing has come easily to Denis Mouyenga. Born and raised in Cameroon, he moved to the United States after he finished graduate school to continue his education and work in the financial services industry. He soon gained citizenship and joined the U.S. military. After deployment, he worked in consulting and then transitioned to the federal government. His work in the public sector exposed him to the disconnect between government contracts and minority business owners. Within several years, he left his position in the public sector to launch Mouyenga Group, a professional services firm that worked with disadvantaged business owners to help them secure government contracts. It's a position that allows him to do, "a lot of good, with and for a lot of people."

Denis is a firm believer that an entrepreneurial mindset extends beyond starting a company. It embodies a drive to use all available resources to create a product with the capacity to elevate individuals and communities. His willingness to learn is what pushed him to participate in ICCC. He enjoyed the program's clear and condensed structure, as well as the educational opportunities and access to capital it afforded. Establishing a network of investors and small business owners allowed him to receive unbiased feedback on his strategy. Denis implemented the information he gained at ICCC to grow Mouyenga Group aggressively and leveraged his international experience to expand its operations throughout the United States and into sub-Saharan



Africa. Growing the company hasn't always been easy for Denis, but his skill set, reputation, and expertise have put the company on track to achieve sustained growth. His commitment to learning and participation in ICCC has enabled him to use a wealth of knowledge to "work more, enjoy more, and do more good for society."

"Entrepreneurial mindset is not about owning a business, it's about being smart about a certain goal to improve your own life and other people's lives."

Denis Mouyenga, CEO, Mouyenga

*The Eastern Region represents 561 ICCC companies, nearly one-third of all participants, largely due to a concentration of high-population urban centers. This area provides innumerable opportunities and challenges for business owners. Certain urban cores, such as Washington D.C. and New York, have significantly higher poverty levels and higher-than-average unemployment. The region also boasts a higher median household income than the U.S. average, which means income inequality is also prevalent within the region. In this region, minority-owned and women-owned businesses are underrepresented based on national averages. ICCC alumni from the Eastern Region have experienced impressive business growth, and continue to promote job creation in their communities. The following profiles showcase businesses that are key to bridging economic divides by creating jobs and wealth in a dense and diverse region.**

561
businesses

118%
average total revenue growth

4,730
jobs created

$300M
capital raised

41%
women-owned

57%
minority-owned

**2015 American Community Survey and 2012 US Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners*



Eastern Region



Building a business for the common good

126% revenue growth since ICCC

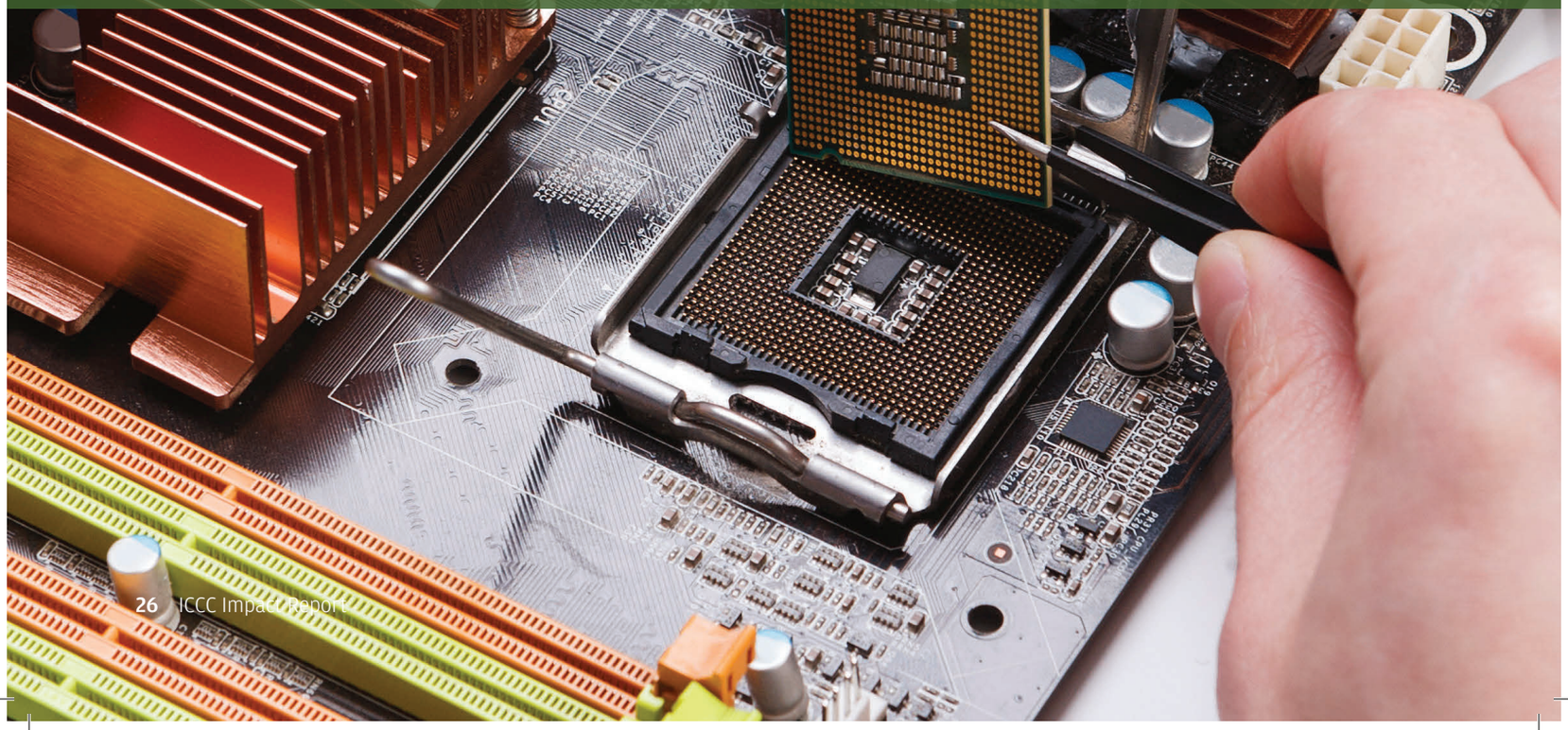
Ombligo CEO Harris Edelman has always believed in Theodore Roosevelt's idea from Citizenship in the Republic: "The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena." Harris always strives to adhere to this notion and places a strong emphasis on community engagement, education, and opportunity. When the computer hardware liquidator company that he worked for went out of business, he decided to employ the passions and values he had carried with him since childhood and launch his own business.

Ombligo, an IT refurbishing and recycling company, was born out of Harris's desire to create a business that was successful on all sides – both in terms of earning profit and creating a positive social impact. Through its services and products, the company promotes environmental sustainability and community benefits. Largely self-financed, Ombligo grew quickly. Although Harris was interested in seeking capital, he wanted to be able to show investors that the company was capable of sustained organic growth. He participated in ICCC to deepen his knowledge of the different types of financing available and practice pitching to investors. Through participating in the various aspects of ICCC, Harris was able to perfect his company presentation and pitch. In addition, Harris learned the importance of thinking strategically and articulating a clear vision for the company's future.

Ombligo continues to achieve staggering levels of growth. This growth is due to its great employees, who care about what they do and why they are doing it. In 2017, the company was ranked sixty-eighth on the Inner City 100, ICIC's list of the fastest-growing inner city businesses in America. By the nature of its services, Ombligo facilitates environmental, social, and economic development, but Harris has also made an effort to ensure that the company is actively engaged in the Brooklyn community. By ensuring that Ombligo's impact extends beyond revenue creation by providing community benefits, and by maintaining a growth mindset, Harris makes sure he is a "man who is actually in the arena."

"A+ ! Thanks so much for investing in entrepreneurs and small businesses."

Harris Edelman, CEO, Ombligo



EAST

Keeping up with the times

24% revenue growth in one year since ICCC

Since he was a child, David Rampulla has been fascinated by entrepreneurship: two of his uncles were business owners, and growing up, David was in awe of the passion, innovation, and freedom that their jobs allowed. After college, he worked in various departments of an advertising agency before starting a national full-service advertising firm with a business partner just a few years after graduating from college. After his daughter was born, David narrowed the scope of his business to focus on the northeast corridor to allow him more time at home. That is when he had the opportunity to bid on his first transit media contract.

David's company, Ferry Ads holds media contracts with New York City to advertise on the Staten Island ferries, which carry roughly 80,000 people per day. Since the company was rebranded 13 years ago, Ferry Ads has grown to manage the advertisements on both ends of the ferry route as well as on the boats themselves. Although the company was profitable, David had been unable to outline a clear direction for its future. While David and his staff were extremely successful in their own roles, the company itself was not evolving.

"ICCC reinvigorates you!"

David Rampulla, CEO, Ferry Ads

David credits ICCC for giving him the push to change his perspective for growth. The program went beyond helping him determine the company's next steps for growth: it reinvigorated him, inspired him, and motivated him. David also found the opportunities to network with and learn from other business owners invaluable. While he had been a successful business owner for almost 30 years prior to participating in the program, ICCC gave him the enthusiasm and momentum to define the next stage of Ferry Ads' growth.



David's next step was to modernize the scope of his company by investing in large format LED signage and enlisting Traffic Audit Bureau. He bought billboards that have the capacity to monitor traffic and viewership of the displayed advertisements, giving him a hi-tech advantage. Ferry Ads is one of the few companies to acquire this sophisticated technology, which puts the company in even higher demand for media buyers. The landscape of the ferry route is also evolving with ridership expected to increase. As he takes on these challenges, David continues to participate in ICCC webinars, which support him in continuous growth and push the boundaries of his knowledge.

EAST

Let passion be your guide

102% revenue growth since ICCC

By age twenty, Harris Reinhardt knew that he wanted his future to be in the business world. Harris had worked part-time as a caterer and knew that many catering businesses lacked sufficient staff, so he started an employment agency. After college, following the entrepreneurial spirit of his parents who had owned their business, Harris started formulating a plan for his business. Harris's first contracts were finding work for his friends with catering companies. However, he quickly realized the new hires didn't have the appropriate formalwear, so he created a website to sell affordable tuxedos to people who needed them for work. The market for his product was immediately evident as both parts of Harris's business grew quickly. In 2005 Harris decided to sell his employment agency to a competitor, and focus all his attention on his online retail business.

Paragon Uniform & Apparel, Inc. has achieved unprecedented growth over the last few years, landing them on the Inc. 5000 List of fastest growing companies for 4 years in a row. Although he had managed the company successfully for several years, Harris had trouble securing a loan from debt capital providers to grow the business. He enrolled in ICCC with the goal of adjusting his finances. He gained insight into lending policies and how to best present his company, which helped him prime his business for growth and secure the additional capital he needed. Although Harris joined ICCC so he could expand his network of capital providers, the content of the program and the caliber of speakers encouraged him to think differently about his business strategy. After completing ICCC, he implemented new marketing and financing strategies to better utilize the additional capital for growth and job creation.



Harris Reinhardt, CEO of Paragon Uniform & Apparel, Inc. with his team

After almost 15 years in the industry, Harris has developed a clear understanding of the demands of his customer base, and continues to leverage his considerable experience and lifelong passion for business ownership. Despite the non-traditional trajectory of his life, Harris has created a successful business and has been able to capitalize on his passion.

EAST

Perfecting the way an old service is conducted

25% revenue growth since ICCC

Maureen Rickenbacker has earned a reputation for "finding a way to say yes." Maureen learned early on that establishing trusted partnerships with clients is paramount to the success of her company. After graduating college, Maureen worked at a printing company for eight years. She loved the experience and worked across multiple departments, but was struck by the realization that printing businesses across the industry – by virtue of the specific types of equipment they owned – were limited in the variety of products they could create. She left the workforce when her son was born, but when he was old enough to attend school, she re-entered the printing industry — this time as a business owner.

Maureen founded Rickenbacker Resources with the goal of circumventing the limitations that have traditionally hampered companies in her industry. Rather than invest in her own equipment, she brokers deals between customers and brick-and-mortar printing companies. The efficiency of her model and exemplary standard of service quickly expanded the company's client base and secured a number of sizeable contracts.

Rickenbacker Resources grew steadily. With limited time to commit, Maureen was initially hesitant to participate in ICCC. However, she ended up attending and the program exceeded her expectations. She found the speakers were motivational, dynamic, and offered her an objective perspective on her business practices and growth plan that proved invaluable. The program provided her with tangible skills she was immediately able to implement. She developed a business strategy to position Rickenbacker Resources for long-term growth. As the future of the printing industry becomes increasingly unclear, Maureen has put even more emphasis on her long-term strategy. Rickenbacker Resources was founded – and continues to be sustained – by her drive, passion, and willingness to innovate.

"The presentations and webinars were excellent - I got so much information."

Maureen Rickenbacker, CEO, Rickenbacker Resources



EAST

Looking for answers in an uncommon place

Ovtene founder Alberto Tomisini had a penchant for innovation early in his career, a trait he carries with him to this day. He developed the idea for Ovtene, a revolutionary food preservation packaging material, while at business school in Italy. With the support of a science professor, Alberto created a unique packaging material that was able to preserve the freshness and distinct flavor of produce. Encouraged by his parents who were also business owners, Alberto purchased a small plastics company after graduating, but remained transfixed by the product he invented during college. He continued to tinker for several years with his original idea and later perfected his product. His passion for the product and continuous drive to improve allowed his plastics company to evolve into Ovtene.

The company became wildly popular in Italy and quickly became a staple at Michelin-starred restaurants due to its unmatched ability to preserve the unique taste and freshness of ingredients. The company grew quickly: within a few years, Ovtene was sold across Europe, and the client base expanded to include markets and grocery stores. Alberto decided to market Ovtene in America to expand his market.











Despite the company's dramatic success across Europe, ICCC was invaluable to Alberto and his management team as they moved into the North American market. In addition to expanding his network and pushing him to revise and streamline his business strategy, the program deepened his knowledge of marketing, social media, and finance, and he was able to apply these lessons to Ovtene's European operations as well.

Before ICCC, Alberto had grown the company based primarily on his own instincts, but the program gave him the tools to develop and articulate a clear vision for the company as it continues to expand. In June, 2017 they opened a distribution center in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Ovtene can now be printed and cut in the U.S., proving that Alberto's passion and innovation continue to pay off.

EAST

In an ancient trade, strategy is still king

17% employee growth in one year



Even with the advent of electronic readers and the feared "death of the book," Applewood Books has maintained a competitive advantage by operating in a highly niche market. Now they have a backlist of titles that is "extremely strong" and focus on cultural places and cities where people are searching for niche books.

Phil participated in ICCC because he realized that his company had plateaued. He went into the program hoping to learn new strategies in leadership, and emerged with a new growth mindset and a determination to expand the company. Captivated by Michael Porter's Five Forces lecture, Phil spent a lot of time thinking about ways to expand his business vertically, resulting in a working capital loan to help purchase a stake in the sourcing of materials, and ultimately saving money. Phil was surprised to learn that what he got out of the program was not what he set out for, but it positively impacted his mindset and his perspective on growth.

"I came to the program to understand how I could be a better leader and I came out with a growth-oriented mindset."

Phil Zuckerman, CEO, Applewood Books

The idea of starting a publishing company that hand-prints and binds books that tell their stories of the places, people, and history of Americana is what Phil Zuckerman calls "stupidity." In 1976, that's exactly what Phil did when he founded Applewood Books. He began his work in publishing by printing people's poetry on a press he purchased in college. He worked briefly in educational publishing at Tufts University, and began his professional printing career at twenty-five with a truly artisanal approach using hand-printed and hand-bound books, as well as a commitment to making excellent products which he maintains to this day.

At the beginning, Phil acknowledges that he had very little knowledge about the challenges he was going to face. He learned quickly that publishing is a very capital-intensive business and not particularly profitable. Phil described Applewood Books as "operating like a bank," essentially loaning money to people whose books he's making, hoping to get paid back over time. Selling books requires immense amounts of initial capital, so one of the first skills Phil learned was how to raise money and establish positive relationships with bankers.

At 67, Phil isn't ready to exit his business. Instead, he has a new spark and energy to build on what he's already achieved, make it bigger, and grow the overall value of the business. Realizing that his brand had a lot of opportunity has fueled Phil, and each time he thinks about his strategy he's reminded that he needs to move forward, keep going, and maintain a renewed commitment to making great books.

EAST



Building an American holiday

388% employee growth since ICCC

From its history to its name to its breathtaking holiday displays, American Christmas demands attention. CEO Fred Schwam's father founded the company — and two others — in the late 1960s and sold all three businesses in 1980, just as Fred was preparing to graduate college. A business major, Fred had a deep familiarity with and investment in the brand, so he worked out a deal with his father and the new owner to buy back American Christmas and became its CEO in 1988.

Fred's initial years at the helm were tumultuous. The company grew slowly, and Fred often had to cover payroll with his personal credit card. He credits his first years as CEO as an instrumental learning experience; to this day, there is no role in the company that he has not occupied during his tenure. In 1997, American Christmas secured contracts to decorate Radio City Music Hall and Rockefeller Center during the holiday season, which immediately catapulted the company onto the national stage and substantially increased its revenue and name recognition.

American Christmas's extraordinary levels of growth earned it a near-perennial spot on ICIC's Inner City 100 list of America's fastest-growing inner city businesses. Although the company was poised for growth, Fred participated in ICCC, both for the education and to explore options for selling his business. American Christmas had attracted substantial attention from potential buyers and private equity investors. Fred wanted feedback on the valuation of his company and how to respond to the offers. Participating in ICCC allowed Fred to get vital feedback from capital providers.

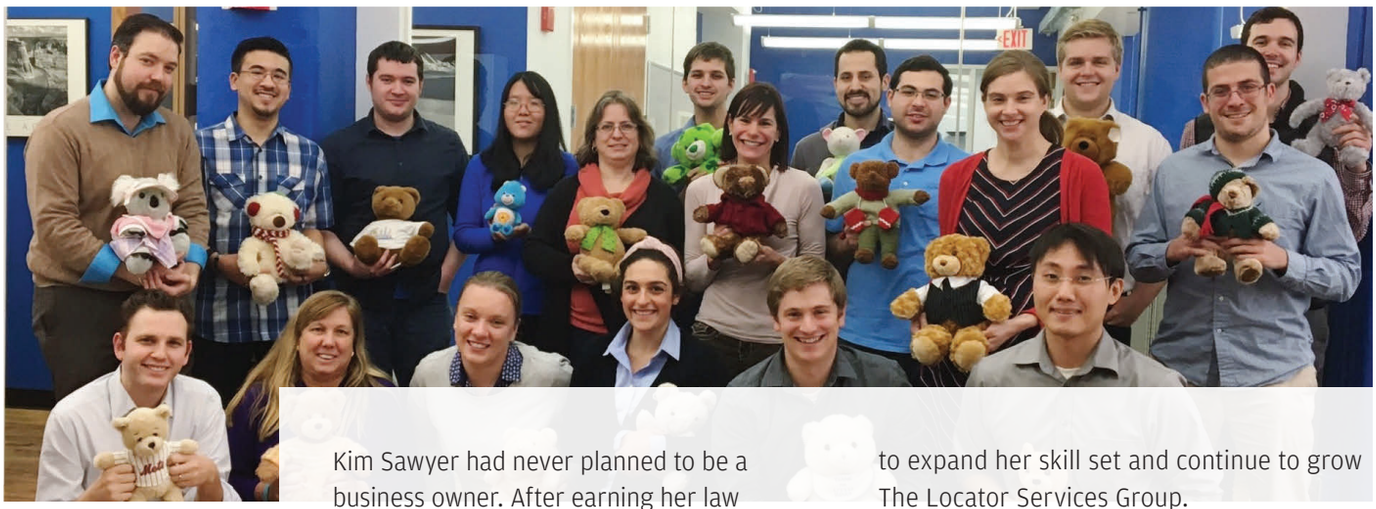
Fred decided against selling American Christmas and continued to maintain full ownership of the company, but began running it as if he were preparing to sell. After attending an industry trade show in 2012 he connected with a buyer who offered a deal and a vision for the company that excited him. They recently finalized the terms of the sale, ensuring all of the company's assets and employees stayed intact. Fred will stay on at American Christmas through the transition process, ensuring that the company's employees, culture, and reputation continue to thrive.



EAST

Taking a risk for success

1196% revenue growth since ICCC





Kim Sawyer and team

Kim Sawyer had never planned to be a business owner. After earning her law degree, she worked at a corporate firm and in state government before joining a private company as general counsel. Frustrated and unfulfilled in her role, Kim left the company and despite having no prior business experience, launched The Locator Services Group, a boutique firm that worked with Fortune 1000 companies and specializes in corporate asset recovery. Twenty-three years later, Kim had never imagined that the business she founded could have achieved such staggering levels of success.

"Being able to network with the people associated with ICCC was an incredible opportunity."

Kim Sawyer, former CEO and Consultant, The Locator Services Group

Kim participated in ICCC multiple times, primarily so she could learn from and network with the elite professors and practitioners associated with the program. Kim did not have a formal business background, and ICCC gave her a comprehensive overview of business management and strategy that enabled her to expand her skill set and continue to grow The Locator Services Group.

Kim found the program incredibly informative from an academic perspective. She credits ICCC with expanding her professional network and introducing her to future mentors and colleagues. Initially, she was wary of the prospect of pitching to a room of investors; however, ICCC helped her develop confidence in herself and her business that she didn't have before. She took full advantage of the resources that ICCC offered and worked with a coach to develop and refine her capital pitch. At the culminating conference, she networked comfortably with investors and other business owners.

In May, Kim sold the company to PricewaterhouseCoopers, an international professional services giant. The Locator Services Group had attracted such a large client base that Kim knew it would be impossible for the company to hire enough staff to provide the same standard of service. Kim remains involved throughout the transition process. She is eager to have the freedom to pursue a new path and find new opportunities to make a difference.

Midwest Region

*The Midwest Region encompasses the "Rust Belt" and other former manufacturing hubs including Detroit, Chicago, and St. Louis. Declines in manufacturing and waning populations have profoundly impacted the economic growth and well-being of this region. Although home to large urban centers, this region has higher-than-average poverty and unemployment rates in states with former manufacturing cores like Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois. Consequently, most states in this region have median incomes lower than the national average, and an under-representation of minority-owned businesses. Despite this, 64% of the businesses ICCC has worked with in the region have been minority-owned. While ICCC has long-standing relationships with inner cities in Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois, significant work and growth has also been achieved in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Missouri, where there are communities with expansive economic potential and growing populations. The education ICCC provides in this region will continue to encourage the growth of under-represented businesses and reduce the economic burdens of struggling urban cores. The region is characterized by its neighborliness, a common thread for many ICCC businesses that have been sustained by family and local networks.**

366
businesses

180%
average total revenue growth

3,010
jobs created

$281M
capital raised

38%
women-owned

64%
minority-owned



*2015 American Community Survey and 2012 US Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners



Profit with a purpose

147% revenue growth since ICCC



Gary Hobbs, CEO, BWI

A former corporate executive at AT&T, BWI CEO Gary Hobbs has always been interested in entrepreneurship. When he left his role at AT&T, Gary worked in consulting before he started BWI. He and his wife were heavily invested in real estate and Gary decided to leverage the properties he already owned to launch BWI, an asset management business in Indianapolis. In its early years, BWI primarily purchased, refurbished, and sold homes. Recently, when the market crashed in 2008, Gary had to reevaluate his company's business plan.







When asked to describe BWI, Gary's response was simple: "profit with a purpose." After 2008, he rebranded his business and shifted the focus from asset management to affordable urban housing. This was of distinct importance in Indianapolis where the poverty rate is 21%, seven percent higher than the national average. Out of this need the business began to grow rapidly, prompting Gary to expand and hire a team of financial analysts. By 2012, the company began providing construction management services and quickly extended its portfolio to include affordable housing, market-rate housing, and mixed-use developments, focusing on the people and communities served.

In 2012 Gary participated in ICCC because he was interested in networking and expanding his network of capital providers. The executive education training he received was vital to preparing him for pitching his business. ICCC helped him craft a narrative for his business that he later used to successfully secure sizable capital, allowing him to continue growing his company and expanding its community impact. The knowledge and experience were so useful that Gary returned to ICCC a second time in 2015. That same year BWI was second on the Inner City 100 list. Gary's commitment to learning more and pushing his business's impact means BWI has continued to achieve extraordinary levels of growth and plans to continue its expansion - implementing its motto of "profit with a purpose" throughout the region.

Complacency is the kryptonite of growth

100% revenue growth since ICCC

Twenty-three years after creating Pangea Group, Mike Zambrana is still seeking the latest knowledge and applicable strategy to keep his St. Louis-based business flourishing. As the son of an immigrant entrepreneur, Mike was raised with a "can do" spirit, enmeshed in a world of design and construction. While Mike was working for some of the largest heavy construction companies in the country, his father was struck by a series of strokes, prompting Mike to return to the family business and run his father's design firm. Mike later left the family business in 1994 and started Pangea Group, an environmental construction and engineering company, his true passion.

Amazingly, Mike started the business from his basement with a single customer, the Department of Energy, and a contract to build mixed waste treatment plants at former Manhattan Project sites. Mike concentrated on developing a core competency in doing federal contracts to attract similar clients. He successfully grew the business by utilizing the expansive network built during his years in construction and design.

Mike recognized the need to continually develop and adjust, traits that prompted him to participate in ICCC. Mike views himself as Pangea Group's chief strategist and was intrigued by ICCC as a means of seeing "what's out there" and to update his best practices. In reflecting on their early success and growth, Mike mentioned that his team lacked a lot of discipline, a slippery slope toward growing tired and complacent. Mike realized that you can nurture, inspire, and motivate passion, but you can't teach it. It's a unique trait in people. He marshalled the growth of his business by hiring managers who were not complacent, but instead driven by passion for the work. He attributes his hiring practices as a key feature to his success. The tactic has allowed Pangea Group to expand their offering and client base and requires continual growth of their knowledge base, their strategy, and their financing.

"I absolutely love the content."

Mike Zambrana, CEO, Pangea Group

His participation encouraged him to step back and reevaluate the endgame of growth and strategy. Knowing that he wanted to maintain solid cash flow and clients, ICCC allowed him the ability to escape the details of everyday business and reassess the direction and strategy of his company. Mike remains committed to continually pushing Pangea Group to have a better year than the one before, not allowing his success to lead to complacency.

MIDWEST

Manifesting your passion

100% employee growth since ICCC



Demitrus Evans, CEO, TEIL and team

Demitrus Evans has always been passionate about human rights law; however, she never thought that her passion would manifest into owning an international law firm. A practicing attorney for nineteen years, she was burnt out and unfulfilled by her job as a trial lawyer so she charted other ways to make an impact through her career. Realizing that the corporate world wields significant influence on an international scale pushed her toward international corporations and finance law, with the goal of founding a business that would hold global companies to a higher standard of social responsibility.

Demitrus had grown up in a family of entrepreneurs, but she had no formal business training, which led to relatively slow growth in TEIL's early years. Skeptical of taking on debt, she grew the business organically and focused on cultivating her client base. The firm was growing modestly, opened up a brick-and-mortar office in Chicago and started developing contacts in eastern Africa. Demitrus recognized that she had to master a steep learning curve and actively pursued educational opportunities to supplement her business experience, leading her to complete ICCC in both 2014 and 2015.

ICCC was invaluable to Demitrus as she positioned the company for continued growth. The program gave her the business skill set she had been seeking. In addition to helping clarify her target market and develop a specific growth plan, the opportunity to network with ICCC peers and learn from other small business executives was inspirational. She had always been averse to taking out a loan to grow her business but networking with business owners that had successfully utilized debt to grow their business made the possibility of taking out a loan seem tangible and practical.

After completing ICCC and receiving direct feedback on her capital pitch, Demitrus leveraged her local network of banks and opened her first line of credit within a year of completing the program. She plans to expand her business by opening another office in Chicago and seek further financing for growth. By following her passion, and supplementing it with education, Demitrus provides a prime example of the power to create, provide, and grow as a business leader.

Leave the world better

67% employee growth in one year since ICCC

Expecting his first child, Ron DeLyons decided he wanted to use his experience in the finance world to create a business that would combat climate change for the next generation and those that follow; his dad always told him to "leave things better than you found them." Ron performed market research but his gut told him that renewable energy was a bright and growing market that was in line with his objectives. Hoping to make an impact on climate change he founded Creekwood Energy Partners, a firm that provides energy efficiency and renewable energy programs that focus on reducing harmful emissions using innovative financing structures. Ron has been strategically growing the company and was recently certified as a power broker by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, further expanding the company's offerings.

Ron self-funded Creekwood with a business partner and came to ICCC to evaluate how best to position the company for outside growth capital. The company had been scaling to prepare for large projects on the horizon. Capital would be essential for Creekwood to successfully sustain their growth and impact. Participating in the program felt like a "master's degree on the optimal capital structure" and Ron found the professors and coaches to be exceptional. Teachings that he had heard in the past were discussed in ways that now seemed relevant to Creekwood.



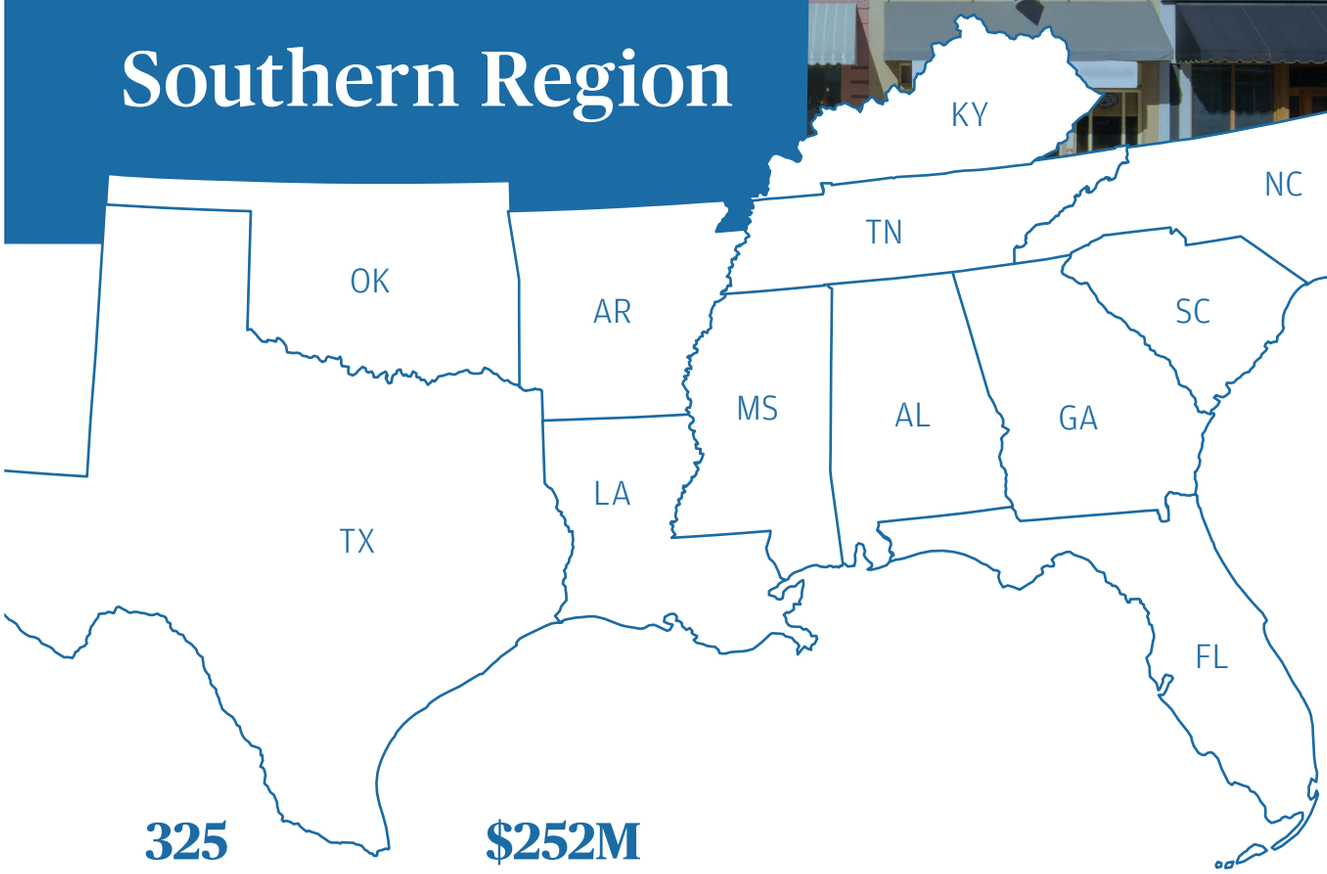
"A master's degree on the optimal capital structure."

Ron DeLyons, CEO, Creekwood Energy

The seminar also helped Ron refine his marketing strategy and validated their path. After completing the program, Ron felt that his financing plan and vision for Creekwood were reaffirmed. Since participating, Creekwood has secured capital and is in the process of partnering with numerous local and regional organizations for both utility and energy efficiency programs. Shifting toward larger projects, with a clear capital vision, Ron has positioned Creekwood for rapid growth while creating a significant impact on clean energy development in Ohio.



Southern Region



325
businesses

$252M
capital raised

312%
average total revenue growth

37%
women-owned

1,248
jobs created

74%
minority-owned

*The southern United States presents unique opportunities and challenges for business owners. An area historically largely devoid of manufacturing and significant urban cores, states in the southern US have recently been experiencing expanding populations, especially in Texas and Florida. Both minority-owned and women-owned businesses are well-represented in figures that are higher than the national average, reflecting economic opportunity for underrepresented groups. However, this Southern Region has the lowest median household income and highest levels of poverty of any in the U.S, exacerbated by a history of racial tensions. Therefore, ICCC alumni provide the community with huge benefits by helping minority- and women-owned businesses thrive in their communities. Of the more than 300 companies ICCC has worked with, they have shown average total revenue growth of greater than 300% and increased employment faster than any other region. The continued presence of ICCC will provide necessary education, connections and capital to enhance what's working to help push this region toward providing greater economic prosperity for all.**

**2015 American Community Survey and 2012 US Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners*



Bringing spice to Birmingham

3900% revenue growth since ICCC





Zebbie Carney, CEO, Eugene's Hot Chicken

Zebbie Carney lost his father at age 17, but before his death, he had instilled in his son a sense of dedication, a drive for success, and a willingness to take a leap of faith. Born and raised in Nashville, Zebbie worked as an executive chef for ten years before his company transferred him to Birmingham, where he was struck by the lack of hot chicken – a specialty fried chicken that is a mainstay in his hometown.

He noticed that hot chicken pop-ups were appearing across the country and decided to bring the concept to Birmingham, launching Eugene's Hot Chicken – named for his father's middle name. Zebbie had no prior business ownership experience and was determined to grow. He started selling the product out of his now-famous red food truck and focused his efforts on cultivating three key items that he deemed critical to the business's success: his brand, his food, and his service.

Zebbie's strategy was successful, and Eugene's Hot Chicken became a local favorite. In an effort to supplement his business knowledge, Zebbie sought out opportunities for executive education and participated in ICCC in 2015. The program's in-depth and comprehensive nature surprised Zebbie, who had initially expected a simple and general overview on business practices. Instead, Zebbie learned valuable strategies for marketing, pitching to capital providers, and leveraging debt, which he was immediately able to incorporate into his management of the young, growing business.

After ICCC, Zebbie opened a brick-and-mortar restaurant and started a catering service, which he now operates in addition to his food truck. Eugene's Hot Chicken continues to grow at a staggering rate, has attracted attention from private equity investors, and has been featured in The Food Network and in USA Today. As the company grows, Zebbie has continued to focus on cultivating its brand, its food, and its service as he continues to position Eugene's Hot Chicken for long-term growth and to honor his father's legacy.

SOUTH

Be a part of the solution

86% employee growth since ICCC



Jane Gonzalez, CEO, Medwheels

Medwheels CEO, Jane Gonzalez was building a successful accounting career in corporate America when her mother became critically ill. This ordeal exposed her to the range of issues surrounding healthcare and services to elderly and disabled patients. The experience motivated her to leave her job and move back to her hometown of San Antonio to found Medwheels, providing seniors and individuals with disabilities affordable medical equipment.

Her previously developed skills were easily transferable into Medwheels. Jane was able to grow her business with a solid base of clients in the healthcare industry. She sensed the company should be bigger but needed to deepen her business acumen. Jane participated in ICCC, with the hope that the program could help her develop a comprehensive business strategy that would position the company for long-term growth. Through ICCC, she learned how to adjust and expand her marketing strategy, and for the first time, began to utilize social media platforms to amplify her brand and reach new customers. She created a growth plan that would prepare Medwheels for long-term success.

Jane's impetus for launching Medwheels was a strong personal desire to fill a clear need in her community and over a decade later, she is still guided by that goal. A strong believer in second chances, she often hires formerly incarcerated individuals and uses her company to create and promote economic value in underserved areas. As the national healthcare industry enters a state of uncertainty, Jane is even more committed to growing Medwheels and increasing the number of people she is able to serve. Jane and Medwheels demonstrate the indomitable power of knowledge and planning as a means for creating a strong business with immense social impact.

SOUTH

A light in the darkness

40% employee growth since ICCC



Night Light team

Zawadi Bryant, Anastasia Gentles and Connie Cazares created Night Light Pediatric Urgent Care to address a market failure in children's healthcare. The three, with a mixture of medical and business backgrounds, opened the first Night Light Pediatric Urgent Care in Houston in 2007, offering after-hours medical services.

As CEO, Zawadi is constantly looking for ways to improve and ensure Night Light's infrastructure is prepared for growth. As the company has grown, she realized that expansion requires a whole new level of processes and organization. Though she had experience running their clinics, opening a second and subsequent clinics was a brand new challenge and the executive team had to constantly learn in real-time, which attracted them initially to ICCC. The co-founder had become efficient and effective in operating their current clinic but opening a second one required a new set of skills and processes where trial and error were not viable options.

To grow at the speed that Night Light was looking to achieve, they needed to build the business's capacity and access capital. The co-founders had been approached by equity investors when they had only a few clinics but were unsure how to respond to the offers. Coming into ICCC, Zawadi wasn't certain how best to approach financing of their expansion but found that the program's professors were able to help her understand their options. Zawadi's goal in attending ICCC was to work through their financials and improve their positioning for capital.

Zawadi and her co-founders realized that it was still too early to take on equity capital. The company has now participated in the program twice and raised the growth capital needed to open seven clinics across the Houston area. The co-founders have built strong lending relationships to the point where Night Light is prepared and comfortable with future expansion into new markets. The processes Zawadi and her co-founders have built up coupled with a clear capital vision have led to rapid growth.



Zawadi Bryant, Anastasia Gentles and Connie Cazares, co-founders, Night Light

SOUTH

In search of a good cup of coffee

390% revenue growth since ICCC

A New Orleans native, Icebox Coffee CEO Bebe Newman was raised in an area where cold brew coffee – a specialty coffee never exposed to heat during the brewing process – is ubiquitous. After she left home, first for Washington, D.C. and then Birmingham, she was unable to find a cup of coffee that could compare to what she grew up with. Dissatisfied with her job and still in search of a quality brew, she left the non-profit sector and launched Icebox Coffee, initially brewing the product in a bucket in her garage and selling it at local farmers' markets.

Bebe started the company with the goal of creating a business that would one day be successful enough to sell. The market trends were in her favor. The high quality of her coffee, coupled with the impeccable timing of the launch, positioned Icebox for unprecedented levels of growth.

With Ice Box growing between 300% and 400% each year, Bebe saw no need to pursue debt capital: the company was entirely self-financed, and she had always been wary of taking out a loan. Although she was initially attracted to ICCC because she was eager to broaden her business knowledge and develop a sustainable strategy, the program ultimately shifted her views on debt financing. Through ICCC, she learned that leveraging debt to grow a business is not inherently negative and that securing an outside investment is actually a validation of the company's success. She learned how to use debt as an asset, and soon after she completed the program, she secured debt financing that enabled her to grow.

Completing ICCC, she was able to craft a path forward to grow her business deliberately and strategically and move beyond the haphazard – albeit successful – growth the company had experienced in its early years. ICCC's opening seminar pushed her to define the value and competitive advantage of her company and she learned that she had to create a narrative that could convey Ice Box's value to a potential buyer – giving her the skill set to achieve her long-time goal of selling the company. Bebe recently sold Icebox to Royal Cup Inc. and while she will continue to be involved in the transition, she is already looking ahead. Bebe aims to pay forward the support she has received to the next generation of entrepreneurs "with crazy ideas and no direction," all while finally enjoying a quality cup of cold brew.



A twist to an old service

58% revenue growth since ICCC





When asked why he started Painters on Demand, CEO Chris Jimenez simply replied: "It's in my blood." Although he had never owned a business prior to starting his company, Chris's family has a history in the painting industry. As a child, Chris spent every summer working for his father, a painting contractor. Even at an early age, driving around his neighborhood and identifying the buildings he and his father had painted gave him a distinct sense of pride and ownership in the architectural design of his community.

Chris started Painters on Demand in 2007, at the start of the economic downturn. Noticing that the construction industry was also in a state of relative decline, Chris built a company that offered on-demand painting services. The concept was immediately successful, but they needed capital to finance operations and faced some early challenges in securing funding, inhibiting the growth of the business. Roughly a year after he started Painters on Demand, Chris was able to secure a small loan from a bank, which gave him the resources to purchase more equipment and increase his staff.

While Painters on Demand did not require additional capital when it was nominated for ICCC, executive education appealed to Chris. He came to ICCC for continued learning. His success as an entrepreneur had reinforced his drive and desire to continue learning and building his skill set. He realized that ICCC could provide him with a high-caliber business education he had never formally received. At the opening seminar, he was able to network with bankers and get their direct feedback on his growth plan. ICCC also gave him a comprehensive overview of capital providers and a clear understanding for seeking additional capital. He acquired tangible tools to continue strategically growing his business as well as raising capital again after the program.

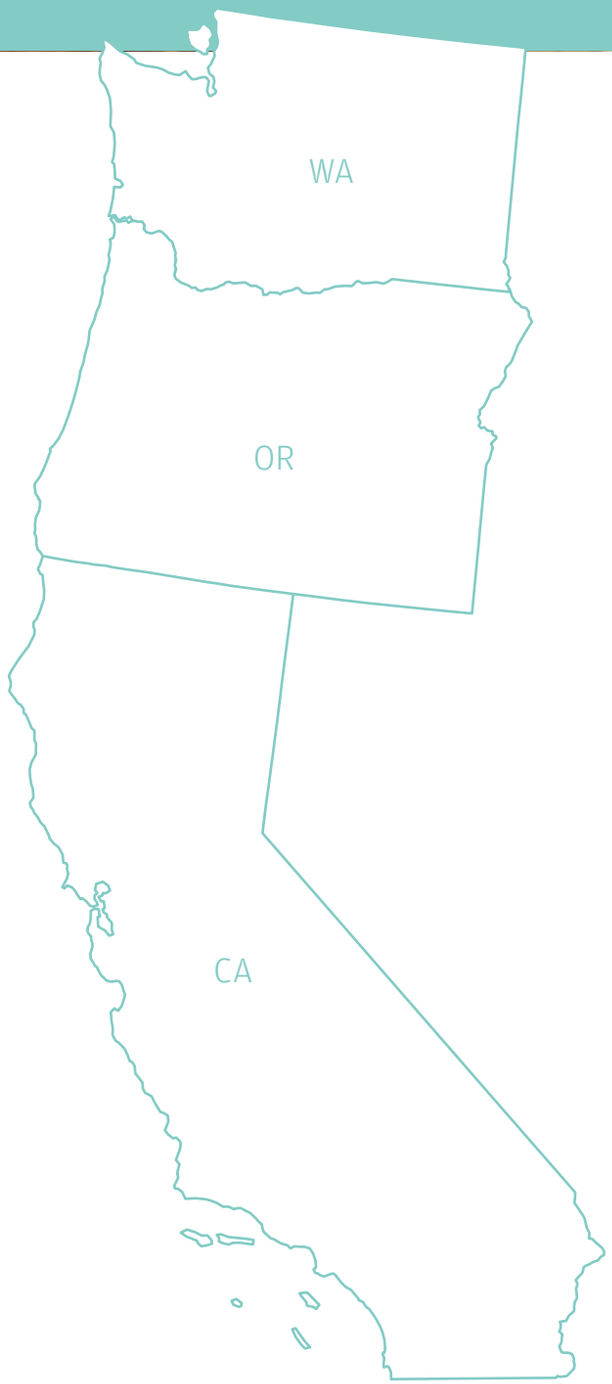
Chris plans to refine his business strategy to increase sales, focusing on the finances of the business. However, he also wants employees to have a sense of ownership and pride in the architecture of their community, the same that he felt as a child working alongside his father.

"My father taught me not to think I knew it all and that's why I was interested in ICCC."

Chris Jimenez, CEO, Painters on Demand



West Coast Region



241
businesses

112%
average total revenue growth

4,083
jobs created

$242M
capital raised

48%
women-owned

60%
minority-owned

*The West Coast Region is an area where in 2005 ICCC got its start in Los Angeles. Pacific Coast participants have shown immense growth, primarily in the urban cores of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland. Throughout recent years the West Coast has seen large population growth and economic success with the growth of technology and green industries. However, that economic success coupled with higher than average median incomes provides challenges for small business owners. Established and successful economic markets can be difficult for emerging or small businesses, particularly where competition is fierce. Nevertheless, nationally underrepresented groups have higher representation out west, with an impressive 40% of businesses being minority-owned and 37% women-owned throughout the region. Similarly, of the businesses ICCC has worked with in the west, half have been women-owned, and 60% are minority-owned. As populations and economic potential continue to grow, it will remain important for ICCC to broaden our scope and market penetration in this region to provide necessary education to business owners hoping to grow and take advantage of a positive economic environment.**

**2015 American Community Survey and 2012 US Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners*

WEST

Healthy foods can be readily available

88% employee growth since ICCC



Nona Lim, CEO, nona lim

When Nona Lim started her company in 2006, the only prior entrepreneurial experience she had was selling bookmarks to family and friends at age 7. As a busy consultant and professional fencer in the Bay Area, Nona was struck by the lack of readily-available, healthy meals. She had no formal training in the culinary industry, but as a child, Nona's father had taught her how to cook a variety of bone broths, soups, and noodles. She decided to launch a part-time meal delivery business using her family recipes.

By 2012, the company had become so successful that Nona devoted full-time to the business. The product gained recognition with big-name vendors such as Whole Foods and by 2014, Whole Foods began selling nona lim products nationally. Because the company was aligned with consumer trends in healthy eating, Nona was able to catapult the business's growth.

When she participated in ICCC in 2015, Nona was immediately attracted to the condensed structure and comprehensive educational opportunities the program offered. Nona lim was growing rapidly, and ICCC helped her navigate her growth by expanding her professional network, giving her access to prominent business practitioners and capital providers, and supporting her as she developed a long-term sustainable strategy.

Capital was an integral part of the growth plan that Nona refined during ICCC. She had never sought capital beyond small loans or gifts from family and friends. Through ICCC she changed her mentality to utilize capital for a broader growth strategy. She developed several connections through ICCC, and within a year of participating in the program, Nona had secured an outside investment. Nona lim has gained recognition on a national scale and has been featured in Forbes, Whole Foods Magazine, and The New York Times. As she moves forward with her growth plan, Nona envisions the company expanding nationally.



Uncommon good in landscaping



Jason Barnette, Director, Good Soil

Jason Barnette is in the business of breaking down barriers and offering second chances. It is a deeply personal mission to him because Jason spent a decade in prison. Upon his release, he attended vocational school and received formal training as a welder, but was not passionate about the work. He carved out time to volunteer at Kingdom Causes Bellflower, a Christian community development organization that is dedicated to building strong and inclusive ties within the community.

Jason eventually joined Kingdom Causes Bellflower and was promoted to lead Good Soil Industries, a social enterprise landscaping company. Good Soil works with its employees, low-income men who face barriers to employment and makes a personal investment by offering job training, life skills, and family strengthening classes. The unique nature and social impact of Good Soil enabled the organization to attract loyal customers for its landscaping services while giving back to the community.

Jason actively pursued opportunities to augment his management experience and gain more business training. He was nominated by Kaiser Permanente to participate in ICCC and jumped at the learning opportunity: he was eager to hear from the high caliber of professors that the program offered and develop his organizational and management skills. ICCC gave him the skill set and perspective to develop a sustainable strategy.

Good Soil Industries has continued to stabilize and is now launching additional programs to expand the services it offers, both to its clients and employees. After participating in ICCC, Jason overhauled the business's marketing strategy and has updated the company's website and ventured into social media. As the business continues to expand, Jason's passion for Good Soil, its mission, and its impact has never wavered. He knows firsthand the life-changing effect that community support and investment can have for individuals who face barriers to employment, and how the power of hard work can restore people to a fulfilling life.

Efficiency by accident

52% revenue growth in one year since ICCC

His friends asked for help making their homes more water-efficient, and Chuck quickly spotted the business opportunity, launching Water Saver Solutions (WSS) in 2008. Fate intervened, and three months after starting his residential service business, the stock market crashed. Chuck's residential clients pulled back, leaving him to do what entrepreneurs do—quickly reassess and make a new plan. He jumped into the more recession-proof commercial market.

Continuing his research, once again Chuck spotted the opportunity and learned healthcare was ranked the third-highest water-wasting industry by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). But just because the opportunity was there doesn't mean Chuck didn't have to work hard to build his business.

While hospitals do tend to waste lots of water, they are subject to strict regulations. The positive aspect of that is the onerous rules discourage some entrepreneurs from entering the field, but Chuck is made of sterner stuff—he embraced the challenge and quickly carved out a niche in the healthcare industry.

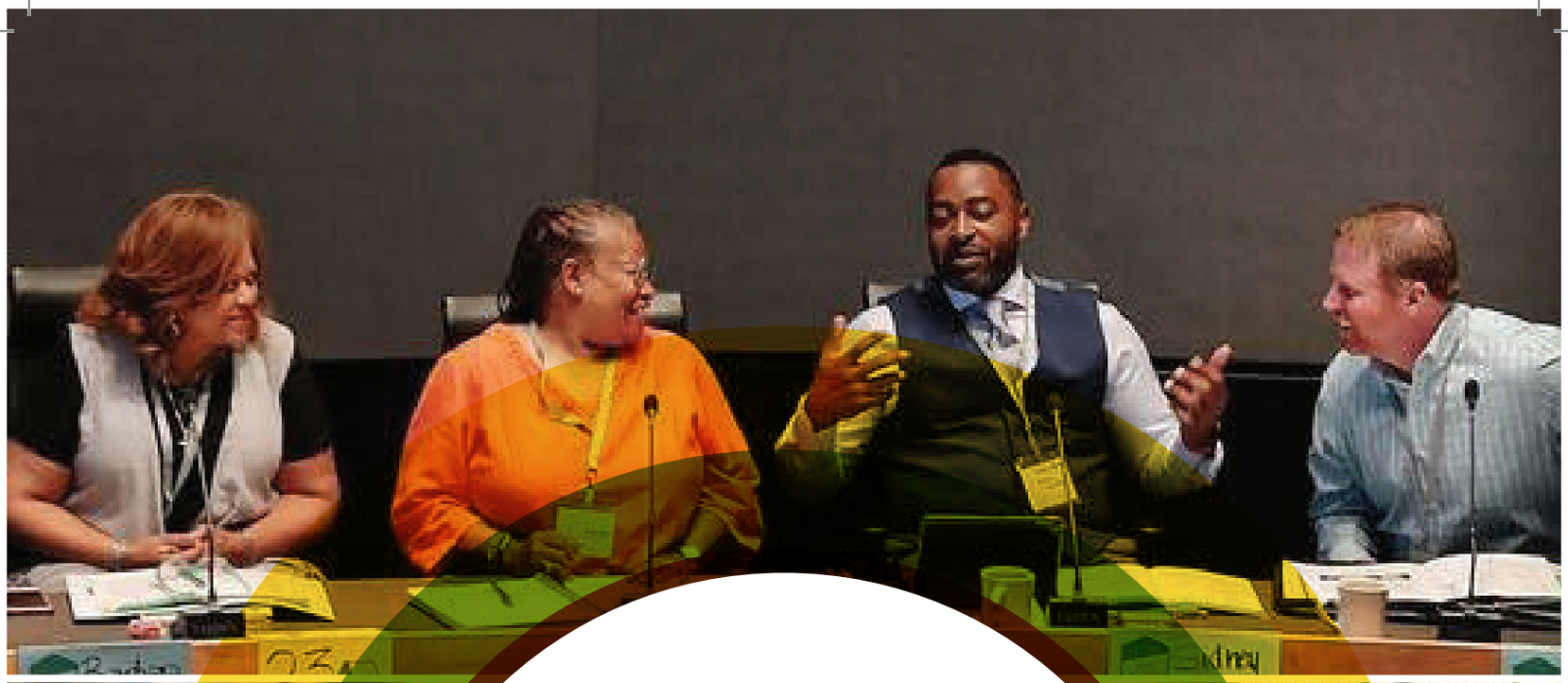
Chuck was nominated for ICCC by Kaiser Permanente. Joining the program enabled him to grow his professional network and develop his business acumen. He says the program, especially the marketing strategy content, was incredibly beneficial and gave him tangible tools to position WSS for long-term growth. Since he participated in the program, Chuck has continued to expand his company's reach, working closely with hospitals to develop water conservation strategies. And WSS continues to dominate the business he uncovered by accident.



Chuck Bragdon, CEO, Water Saver Solutions



CEO of Water Saver and team



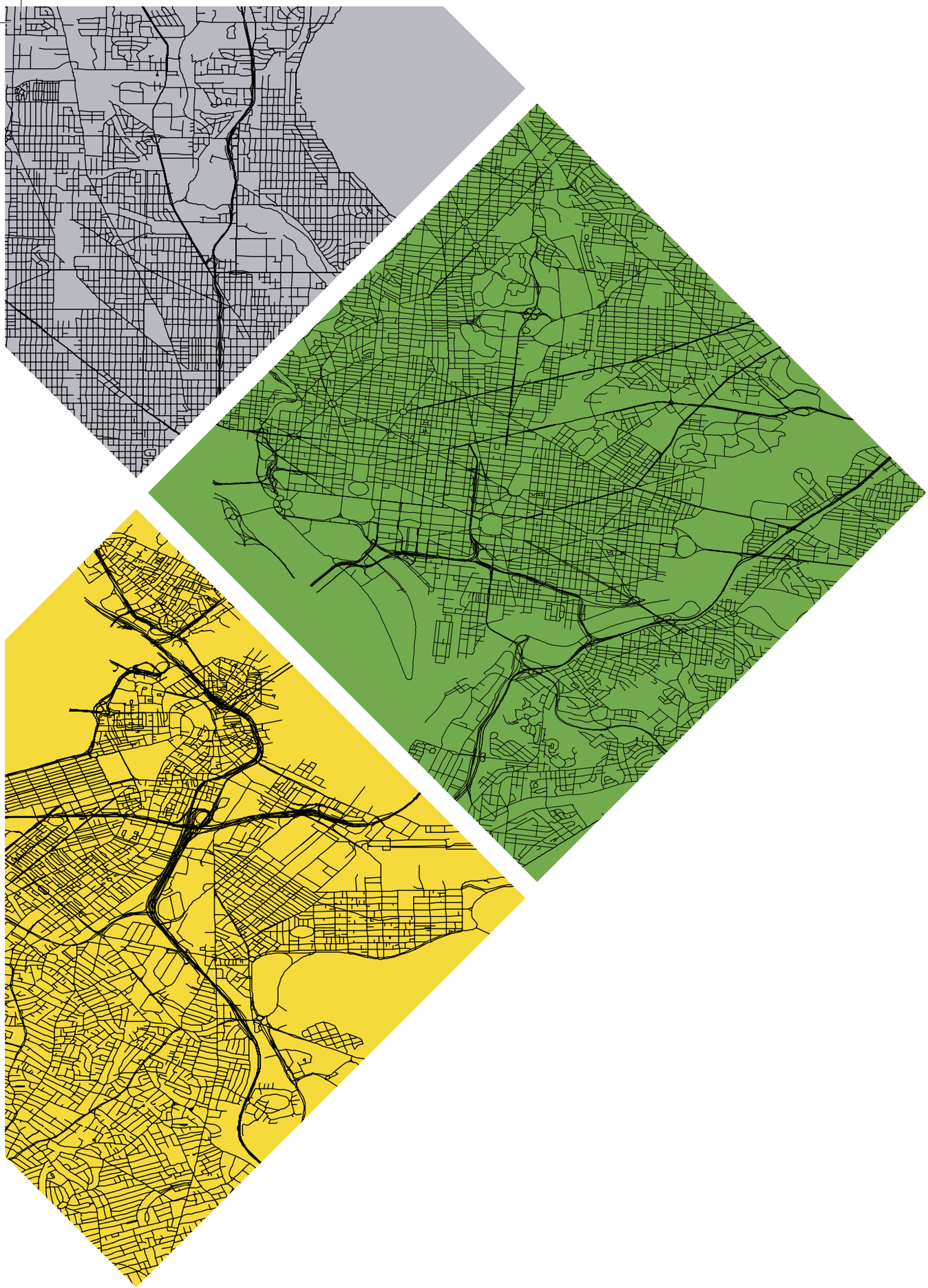
ICCC 360

ICCC education doesn't end at the culminating conference. All ICCC alumni are invited to join the ICCC 360 group – a vibrant alumni network that keeps participants connected to all things related to Inner City Capital Connections. Program events will be scheduled to coordinate with ICCC's welcome breakfasts, opening seminars, and national conference. Stay up-to-date with fellow ICCC alumni, gain access to exclusive Inner City Capital Connections content, and connect with expert practitioners to continue to learn and to accelerate growth within your business. To join ICCC 360, please email us at iccc@icic.org and visit www.linkedin.com/groups/5068611









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