



CLIMATE  
CORPS

# Why Sustainability?

## The California Green Business Network

Climate Corps 18-19

### Local Commerce with a Global Conscience

We are in the midst of a never-before-seen shift in the global climate. The result? The world is shifting to sustainability, and it's changing consumers and businesses alike. People feel a new sense of responsibility. They are looking for new ways to make a positive impact. Today's customers value good products and good deeds. Experiences and ethics. They want genuine service, not lip service. Because of these changing winds, businesses are shifting the way they turn a profit.

Over the past 12 years, the California Green Business Network (CAGBN) has helped spark an explosion of new business practices all designed to make business operations more sensitive to their impact on the world Patagonia, REI, Sierra Nevada, Warby Parker, Ben & Jerry's, Allbirds, and Athleta—these businesses are choosing profit and planet, over profit alone. And at the heart of that choice is the idea that the viability of business itself relies on the resources of healthy ecosystems and on the stability of just societies.

The Sustainable Economy is a phrase that we use to describe this new shift in business norms. This shift requires a new way of thinking. Instead of focusing only on the price or product, companies in the Sustainable Economy need to build a reputation for making a positive impact—for doing less harm. CAGBN is helping organizations across California do just that. Our free framework for sustainability is custom-built to help business owners in over 26 industries run a profitable, socially- and environmentally-responsible business.

In a nutshell, we help businesses understand their current performance—where they're already doing well and where they could improve—through one of our industry-specific checklists. Then, we help them chart a custom roadmap to sustainability, complete with projects, best practices, and useful initiatives. Over the span of six weeks, we provide free technical assistance, educational resources, and financial support to anyone who wants to optimize their business. And by week six, organizations that join The Network will have

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. reduced their environmental impact                    | 4. earned the credibility of a third-party certification |
| 2. lowered their operating cost                          | 5. learned a ton about the triple bottom line, and       |
| 3. harnessed the competitive advantage of sustainability | 6. joined a community of like-minded businesses.         |

### Outcomes



### Our Theory of Change

- Small businesses account for over 99% of total businesses in California, employing 7 million people—nearly 50% of the state's private workforce.
- Despite those statistics, sustainability incentives, education, and assistance are disproportionately provided to large corporations. As a result, there is a glaring need in California and beyond for direct support for the small to medium-sized business community.
- We're trying our best in that space. We know sustainability can be complicated, best practices are always changing, and change requires time and money that small operations don't always have.
- But we're hopeful that the transition to a Sustainable Economy is not only possible, but right around the corner if we can direct technical assistance and financial incentives to the people who need them most.

Khalid R. Kaldi



Khalid Kaldi is a collector of kindness and kinship, with a soul full of justice, weaving relentless curiosity with empathic sensitivity to insist on the shared humanity of all people. He nourishes and nurtures his country through advocacy, civic participation, and prose, and has focused his passions for social, political, and economic change towards earning a Master of Public Policy from the University of California, Berkeley.