

ANNUAL REPORT

BUILD | EMPOWER | THRIVE

2021





TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Mission & Vision	16	VSEDC Consultants
3-4	Message from Leadership	16-17	Awards & Special Events
5-6	Programs & Partners	18	CDFI
7	Webinars	19-20	Youth Tech Efforts
8	Achievements	21-22	Financials
9-10	Legacy Business Program	23-25	Success Stories
11-12	Signature Programs	26	Gift of Partnership
13-15	Meet the Team		



ABOUT VSEDC

WHO WE ARE

South LA deserves advocates who will tirelessly campaign to facilitate essential resources and opportunities that advance economic development. VSEDC is a 501(c)(3) organization proudly serving the community for more than 40 years. Our neighborhoods are full of brilliant entrepreneurs and future business owners who simply need a chance. VSEDC leads the way.

MISSION

VSEDC empowers our community to thrive through building wealth.

VISION

We envision a South Los Angeles where entrepreneurs, youth and workers will have the tools, knowledge and opportunities to succeed in building vibrant neighborhoods, successful businesses and healthy, resilient families.

VALUES

We thrive through the power of partnerships and a collective voice, especially during times when we must fight for what's best for the area we serve. Every person who calls South LA "home" expects to live in safe communities where everyone has the chance to achieve their hopes and dreams.



MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS

KECIA WASHINGTON

Board Chair

Dear VSEDC Friends,

As Board Chair, it is my distinct honor to experience the magic of VSEDC up close as I help champion economic development resources for communities that need support the most. South LA has an incredible history of culture and resilience, yet neighborhoods often find themselves without the basics that every Angeleno deserves.

Together with the Executive Team, I am committed to promoting the dynamic small businesses that call South LA "home." They deserve to be seen, supported, and given the same opportunities as their counterparts in areas of the city that have been lucky enough to receive overflowing resources. The pandemic has been life-shattering for so many, yet our small businesses still stand strong with a refusal to quit. And they shouldn't quit because we need them. They are the foundation of our community and we will use every relationship, strategy, and partnership to create pathways to excellence.

Kecia Washington

Dear VSEDC Supporters + Friends,

Thanks to the unwavering dedication of our staff and partners, we survived yet another year in the midst of a pandemic that ravaged communities that were already in peril. To combat the economic devastation, VSEDC accelerated its efforts to support entrepreneurs during a tumultuous time when many had nowhere to turn. Through one-on-one business coaching, access to loans, technical assistance, and more, we connected South LA small businesses to the resources they needed to thrive.

Our 2021 report provides a brief recap of our commitment to fighting for the resources that entrepreneurs deserve. With the help of supporters like you, we will continue to advocate and build communities where small businesses make exceptional contributions to the local economy.



JOSEPH T. ROUZAN III
President & CEO

OUR PROGRAMS

BUSINESS COACHING

Through tailored, one-on-one business coaching, clients receive the formal support they need to help them realize their entrepreneurial dreams. VSEDC provides the tools for start-up and micro-enterprise businesses—in partnership with the City of Los Angeles. While the pandemic initially led to our exclusive shift to protecting existing business owners, our 2021 efforts resumed support for entrepreneurs at every stage, including start-ups and aspiring entrepreneurs.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Minority business owners have endured decades-long struggles in their efforts to access capital through traditional lending sources that often are not favorable. The pandemic-induced shutdown exacerbated these obstacles, prompting VSEDC to identify emergency support through grants and low interest loans.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

One of the reasons why VSEDC clients repeatedly return for support is due in part to the intense technical assistance that we provide. Instead of simply offering recommendations and suggestions, we assign business coaches to walk clients through a variety of business functions to strengthen their operations.

WEBINARS + CLASSES

As the pandemic continued to rob the world of in-person engagement, VSEDC accelerated its virtual programming to include a comprehensive lineup of classes led by experts across diverse industries. Through group instruction and one-on-one case studies, VSEDC webinars provide a safe space for entrepreneurs to learn strategies and secure feedback on their plans for the future.

OUR BANKING + COMMUNITY PARTNERS



SOUTH LA BEST BUY TECH CENTER PARTNERS

Banks Networking
Boys and Girls Club of America
Brotherhood Crusade
Crypto Blockchain Plug
Expo Center
Gritly
HawkeMedia
Hispanic Heritage Foundation
MARTY
MISLA
Networking for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)

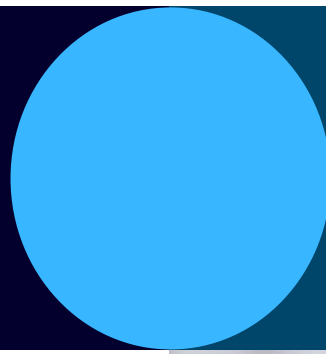
Positive Results Center
Real Estate 100
She Ready Foundation
Snapchat
South LA Robotics
The Clubhouse Network
The Hidden Genius
USC Annenberg Critical Makers Lab
YoWatts YouthSource Center

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

American Business Bank
Bank of India
BizFed Institute
Boston Private
California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH)
Capital One
Cathay Bank
CIT Bank
Citizens Business Bank
City of Los Angeles Economic & Workforce Development Department (EWDD)
Community Build
Comerica Bank
CTBC Bank
Destination Crenshaw
Hon. Curren Price, Los Angeles City Councilmember
Hon. Holly Mitchell, Los Angeles County Supervisor
Hon. Marquise Harris-Dawson, Los Angeles City Councilmember
Hon. Steven Bradford, California State Senator
Hon. Sydney Kamlager, California State Senator

Launchpad Software
Local Initiatives Support Corporation - LA
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LAWDP)
Los Angeles Urban League (LAUL)
Manufacturers Bank
Mayor's Fund LA
Merrill Lynch
Morgan Stanley
Neighborhood Housing Services
Preferred Bank
SLATE-Z
The Center by Lendistry
The Clubhouse Network
Torrey Pines Bank
U.S. Bank
U.S. Small Business Association
University of Southern California
USC Credit Union
Western Alliance Bank

A GLIMPSE INTO OUR WEBINARS



STARTING A BUSINESS



- Entrepreneurship 101
- Business Formation: Having the Correct Structure for your Business
- Preparing An Easy Business Plan for Operating During & After the Pandemic

BRANDING + MARKETING

- Google My Business: Increasing Your Online Customer Base
- Optimize Your Brand With Free Media Tools and Applications
- Facebook Ads and E-Marketing

ACCOUNTING + FINANCE

- Introduction to Accounting Software Tools
- Analyzing Pricing & Cost Structure
- Navigating Your Way Through Your Business Taxes
- 60 Days to Bankable: Loan Readiness



ACHIEVEMENTS

In partnership with the City of Los Angeles, VSEDC proudly operates the South Los Angeles BusinessSource Center where entrepreneurs access diverse resources tailored for every stage of their journey. In collaboration with other public and private partners, the results of our comprehensive efforts include:

\$2.5 MILLION

**AMOUNT IN LOANS FUNDED
THROUGH VSEDC**

We walk clients through the application process and ensure that they have the support to maximize funds

26

**BUSINESSES THAT ACCESSED
CAPITAL THROUGH VSEDC**

Funds used for staffing, expansion, marketing, and more

63

**BUSINESSES PROVIDED WITH
FREE COACHING**

Whether they need accounting or social media support, our experts are here to help

73

NUMBER OF WEBINARS HOSTED

Virtual courses allow attendees to take full advantage of one course or a series

262

WEBINAR PARTICIPANTS

In both English and Spanish, clients have access to expert advice

523

NUMBER OF HOURS PROVIDED IN COACHING

From strategic planning to Human Resources, these hours enhance business operations

127

NUMBER OF JOBS CREATED

Small businesses are the economic engine that drives job creation





LEGACY BUSINESS PROGRAM

The COVID-19 pandemic shattered the hopes and dreams of countless businesses with more than half of Black-owned businesses permanently closed. VSEDC jumped into action and designed a comprehensive business stabilization and enhancement program. We are committed to creating and enhancing programs that small businesses need to survive one of the most traumatizing economic eras in American history.

The program provides:

- Individualized and intensive assessments and coaching
- Help in adapting and thriving within the changing economic landscape
- Planning for long-term financial growth and measurable impact, scaling existing product lines
- Strategies to attract new customers, grow their existing customer base, and utilize technology
- COVID-19 shifted trends in retail, which meant VSEDC focused on strategies for brick-and-mortar businesses to remain profitable anchor businesses and legacy enterprises



LEGACY PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

40

BUSINESSES RECEIVED ONE-ON-ONE COACHING AND SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

40

BUSINESSES SUPPORTED WITH CUSTOMIZED SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

40

BUSINESSES THAT INCREASED FINANCIAL VIABILITY/LOAN READINESS SCORES USING SMALL BUSINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL

40

BUSINESSES THAT INCREASED VIABILITY/RESILIENCY SCORES USING SMALL BUSINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL

12

BUSINESSES THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH 102 - LEADERSHIP COHORT

12

BUSINESSES RECEIVED CUSTOMIZED STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SCALING WITH EXECUTIVE COACHING SESSIONS

You have this entrepreneurial dream for a reason. It's part of your purpose, your vision, your goals for leaving behind a legacy rooted in excellence.

But what happens when you don't know what to do and need support?

You turn to a champion, an ally, and advocate.

You turn to VSEDC.

SIDEWALK VENDORS

“

All work rooted in dignity deserves respect. Sidewalk vendors have long been part of LA culture. It is time that we recognize all the diverse forms of entrepreneurship and make it easier for Angelenos to contribute to the economy. --**Joseph T. Rouzan III**

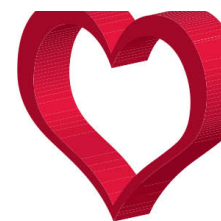
”

In partnership with the City of Los Angeles, VSEDC plays a vital role in assisting entrepreneurs with achieving legal status for operating their business. Through outreach and one-on-one business coaching, we help sidewalk vendors:

- Obtain a Business License and a Seller's Permit
- Renew Permits and Pay and Fees
- Access Technical Assistance
- Enroll in Workshops and More

62	NUMBER OF PERMITS PROCESSED
20	NUMBER OF GRANTS ISSUED
\$5.8K	AMOUNT IN GRANTS FUNDED TO COVER PERMITS
123	HOURS IN BUSINESS COACHING
52	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES VSEDC COACHED





30 Businesses • 1 Mission • 1 Message



\$hop South LA

\$hop Black
\$hop Brown
\$hop Local

SHOPLOVE CAMPAIGN

Between February and April of 2020, 40% of Black business owners lost their businesses, becoming the hardest hit ethnic group in America.

VSEDC mobilized to support 30 Black businesses and other business owners of color with one message and one mission:

Shop Black... Shop Brown... Shop Local... ShopLove

A signature VSEDC initiative, ShopLove sparks an economic empowerment movement by supporting and championing local small businesses that offer a diverse range of products and services to the South LA community.

Small businesses are the heart of the community. By providing the services that residents need to thrive in an area that has historically lacked resources, neighborhoods have options when it comes to food, entertainment, retail, and more. The campaign introduced a Slash Card, where customers enjoyed reduced prices by buying a gift card accepted by all participating businesses.

STAFF + TEAM MEMBERS



GABRIELA ALBA
Executive Assistant



CASSIE BETTS
*Lead Consultant,
Technology +
Innovation*



PAMELA BIZZELL
Programs Manager



THAI BUCKMAN
*Program Coordinator,
Technology + Innovation*



FEDERICO CASTILLO
*Director, Administration +
Finance*



MARIO CRUZ
Program Coordinator



FRANCINE CUA
Staff Accountant



ADAM DOMINGUEZ
Loan Officer



TERRY GUBATAN
Senior Business Coach



CONNIE HWANG
Director, Advancement



JENEE MARTIN
Executive Assistant



RICHELE MOLSON
Senior Program Assistant



RENEE MONCITO
Director, Programs



FARRAH PARKER
*Lead Consultant,
Public Relations + Marketing*



THEO ROUZAN
*Public Relations
Coordinator*



ALMA SECUNDINO
Marketing Coordinator



NAMOCH SOKHOM
Director, Loan Services



LIBBY WILLIAMS
Executive Vice President



DIANE WHITE
*HR Specialist + Office
Manager*



ADRIAN VELIZ
BusinessSource Manager

MEET THE VSEDC BOARD



KECIA WASHINGTON
CHAIR

L.A. Department of Water and Power



SYLVIA CASTILLO
SECRETARY

MUFG Union Bank, N.A.



SMEL GRAHAM
BOARD MEMBER

Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP



KYLA LEE
TREASURER

South Central LA Regional Center



DAVID ROBERTS
BOARD MEMBER

David A. Roberts & Associates



BEA STOTZER
BOARD MEMBER

NEW Capital, LLC



CURTIS FRALIN
BOARD MEMBER

Sticks Holdings, LLC

VSEDC EXPERT CONSULTANTS

Gilbert Buchanan:	Business, Loan and Contract Readiness
Gloria Dioum:	Financial Strategy, Cost Analysis
Marjorie Gayle:	Business Development, Human Resources
Felicia Kaplan:	Digital Marketing – E-commerce – The Virtual Marketplace
Susan Petrella:	Pitch Deck Coach
Rashunda Rene:	Business Development, Business Analysis
Avilio Rubio:	Digital Marketing (Spanish)
Richard Stern:	Fashion Industry Trainings and Workshops
Frank Stokes:	Business Planning
Kamie Taylor:	Business Development, Marketing/Social Media
Debra Watkins:	Business Development, Business Analysis
Anthony Williams:	Procurement Trainings and Workshops
Jessica "Urena":	Webinar Host
Aja Beard:	Hospitality Management
Karen Blackwell:	Program Coordination, Capacity Building, Grant Writing
Fernando Borja:	Business Development (Spanish)
Jonathan Kinnard:	Organizational Leadership
Crystal Mitchell:	Accounting, Taxes
Teanna Ross:	Graphic Designer
Dr. Karen Semien-McBride:	Executive and Business Coaching and Specialized Trainings
Tamika Taylor:	Program Coordination, Capacity Building, Grant Writing

COMMUNITY PROGRESS MAKERS

CITI FOUNDATION AWARDEE

In 2021, VSEDC proudly received the distinction of Citi Foundation Community Progress Maker. This initiative supports visionary organizations that are working to connect underrepresented communities and communities of color to greater social and economic opportunities in six cities across the United States.

Through Citi Foundation's support, VSEDC will continue to deliver vital resources to the entrepreneurs and residents of South LA and beyond through access to capital, business planning, training, development and more. VSEDC champions South LA's diversity and culture and expands opportunities for economic vitality among underrepresented communities.

"VSEDC represents the heart and soul of the community. Throughout the past four decades, we have been helping to realize the dreams of the small business owners, the mom-and-pop shops, the young person with a dream, the first-time entrepreneur, and so many others," said VSEDC President & CEO, Joseph T. Rouzan, III. "As a Citi Foundation Community Progress Maker, we will continue our tradition of proudly serving the hard-working people of this community."



PARTNERS APPRECIATION MIXER

After a 20-month hiatus due to the ongoing pandemic, VSEDC hosted its annual Partners Appreciation Mixer on October 15, 2021. The pandemic and subsequent economic shutdown decimated South LA, but our partners were steadfast in their commitment to facilitating economic stability—VSEDC received an organizational record of more than \$4 million in donations.

Held at The Conference Room, thanks to the generosity of restaurant owner and philanthropist Peter Georges, VSEDC hosted 100 partners from both private and public sectors along with local elected officials and community advocates. Attendees included Los Angeles City Councilmember of District 9, Curren D. Price, Jr., who spoke on the vital role VSEDC plays in community advocacy.

Further adding to the evening's intrigue, Los Angeles native and 104.7 FM radio host and producer, Josefa Salinas served as the Mistress of Ceremonies. This year's event honored four outstanding partners who boldly championed the needs of the community through the continuing phases of the turbulent pandemic.

“VSEDC's partners provide the means for our organization to operate and innovate, as we prepare our community for the future.”

--Connie Hwang

VSEDC's Director of Advancement

This year's event honored four outstanding partners who boldly championed the needs of the community through the continuing phases of a turbulent pandemic.

Bank Partner of the Year

Sylvia Castillo, Director, Foundation and Community Outreach Officer - Union Bank

Corporate Partner of the Year

Donovan Green, Director, External Affairs - AT&T

Foundation Partner of the Year

Allison Holmes, Senior Director, Operations and Strategy - Annenberg Foundation

Government Partner of the Year

Victor Parker, Associate Administrator (Acting) for the Office of Field Operations - SBA



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION (CDFI)

In 2018, VSEDC earned the coveted Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) distinction—one of only 1,000 nationwide. As the only CDFI serving South LA, this status allows VSEDC to provide low-income communities with access to affordable lending and capital that has often eluded them.

Since its inception, VSEDC has produced more than \$60 million in physical development projects, created and retained more than 3,200 jobs, and served over 25,200 pre-startups, startups, and operating businesses—the vast majority of whom are minority- owned (90%) or have minimal income (82%). In total, VSEDC has helped clients access approximately \$252.6 million in capital from partners and other alternate lenders through intensive one-on-one technical assistance, loan packaging assistance, and business coaching.

Our CDFI Products Include:

MINI MICRO Pre-Startups, ePre-Startups, and existing businesses eligible for up to \$10K	MICRO New and established small businesses eligible for \$10-50K	SMALL BUSINESS LOAN New and established small businesses eligible for \$50- \$250K	CONTRACT FINANCING Businesses that have secured large public or private contracts	AFFORDABLE HOUSING Supports the development or remodeling of five units or more
--	--	--	---	---

VSEDC has organically built a culture and infrastructure for lending, functioning primarily as a loan packager from 2015-2017, while launching a direct lending program in 2016. Since 2016, VSEDC has helped entrepreneurs access nearly \$13.5 million in capital and create or retain 404 jobs. Concurrently, the organization funded nearly \$1,000,000 in direct loans to micro and small business owners, 100% of whom were low-income, African American, Hispanic, and/or Latinx.

CDFI SUCCESS

Albina Lopez is a community-based counselor who has been providing invaluable counseling services to families and victims of criminal abuse for over 15 years. A native Angeleno, a Latina, and a single mom, she offers her services to a growing number of students of East Los Angeles College—many of whom are parents themselves trying to improve their lives. A mental health service provider within the Kaiser Permanente system, she holds a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology. VSEDC proudly financed a \$10,000 loan to Albina, which she will use to hire two part-time clinical psychologists to support her increased caseload amid the pandemic. With this loan, she will be able to impact thousands of Los Angeles County residents who are in dire need of mental health support.



SOUTH LA BEST BUY TEEN TECH CENTER PRESENTED BY VSEDC



Leveraging an alliance with VSEDC, Best Buy has committed \$10 million over five years to pilot an innovative Community Impact hub in Los Angeles. With the goal to create equitable opportunities and enhance the lives of youth in the Los Angeles community, the South LA Best Buy Teen Tech Center, presented by VSEDC, will offer supportive programming including compensation, scholarships, and post-secondary guidance. We are cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets and intellectual property ownership.

With a soft launch held in the Fall of 2021, the Center will serve more than 1,000 students annually through in-person and remote programs, partnerships, and collaborations. Focused on a local cluster of public schools with more than 100,000 students, the Center will offer both drop-in and structured programs for local youth ages 10-24 years old.

PARTNERS

Our partners have decades of experience impacting local communities through philanthropy, workforce, and economic development. With the support of aligned South LA nonprofits and PledgeLA's network of more than 225 venture capitalist firms and tech companies, we facilitate one of the most high-impact youth centers in the nation.

Our resources extend beyond broadband and hotspots. Our mission is to equip students with the digital skills and opportunities that they need to thrive in an ever-evolving 21st-century economy. Building and operating the largest Best Buy Teen Tech Center on the West Coast will have generational impacts, right in the heart of South LA.

Recognizing their shared vision, VSEDC and AnnenbergTech completed a restoration of a 12,200 sq. ft. facility located at 6109 S. Western Avenue. In 2019, the partners also co-authored a successful grant to build a Best Buy Teen Tech Center.



A ROBUST STRATEGY



We had a successful soft launch for the South LA Best Buy Teen Tech Center in 2021, to be followed by a Grand Opening planned for June 2, 2022.

“When I think of VSEDC’s history of advocating for Black and Brown entrepreneurs, I’m elated to add a tech lens that helps businesses excel through social media, video production, virtual reality, and more.”

Cassie Betts, VSEDC's Lead Consultant--Technology + Innovation

11

YOUTH WHO COMPLETED
CYBERSECURITY, ROBOTICS,
A/V COURSE

13

YOUTH WHO COMPLETED
FINANCIAL LITERACY, GRAPHIC
DESIGN, VIDEO CONTENT,
EDITING + WEB DEV COURSE

26

YOUTH WHO COMPLETED JAVA SCRIPT +
PYTHON CODING COURSE

37

YOUTH WHO COMPLETED WEB
DEV + REACTING FOR INTERFACE

15

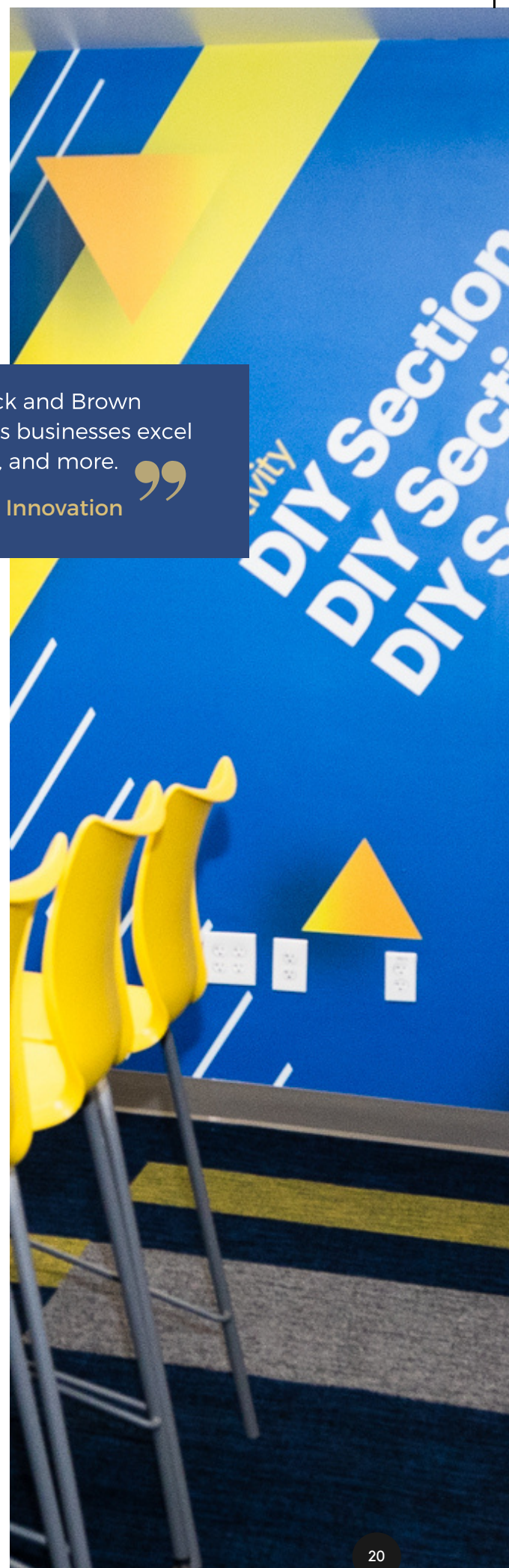
YOUTH WHO COMPLETED RESILIENCY +
LEADERSHIP COURSE

7

YOUTH WHO COMPLETED GRITLY
HIGH TECH SALES COURSE

10

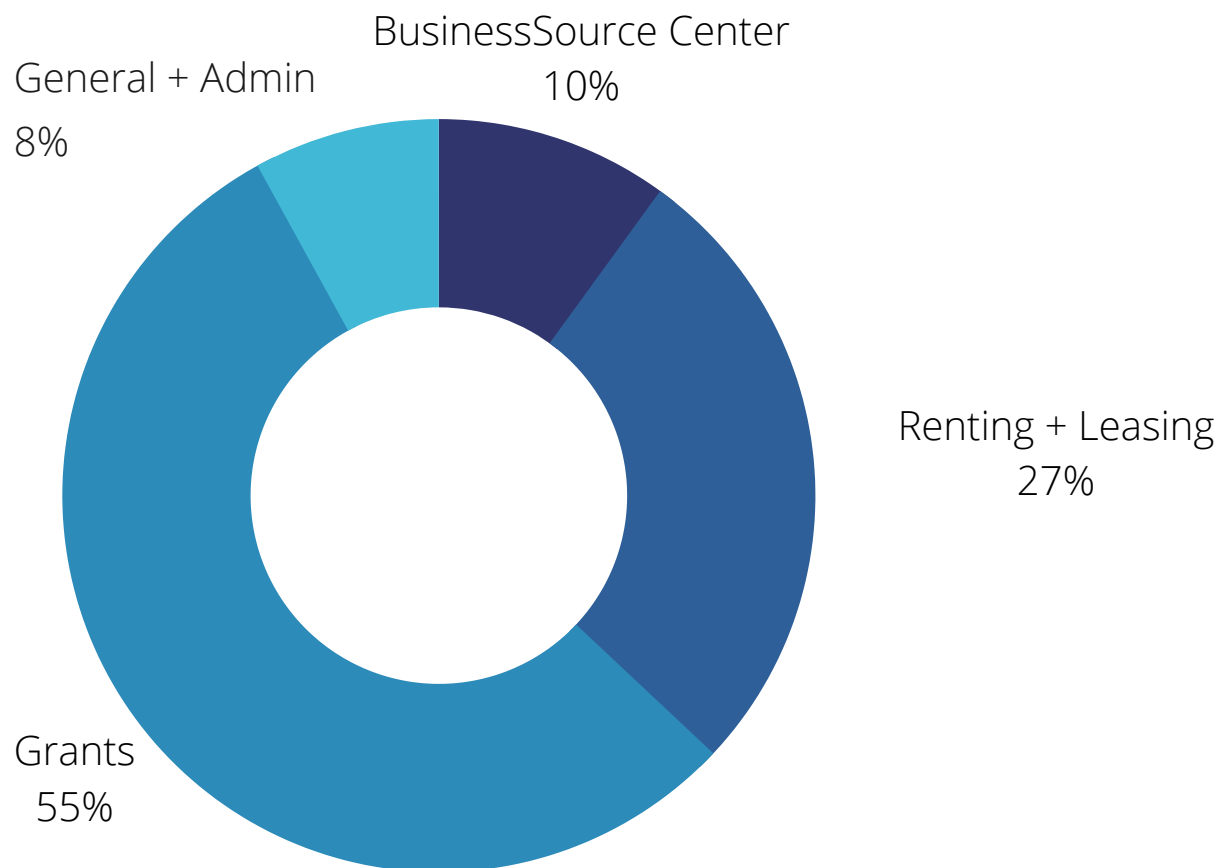
YOUTH WHO COMPLETED
LANDING PAGE CREATION
COURSE



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

REVENUE FROM GRANTS + REAL ESTATE \$4,810,000

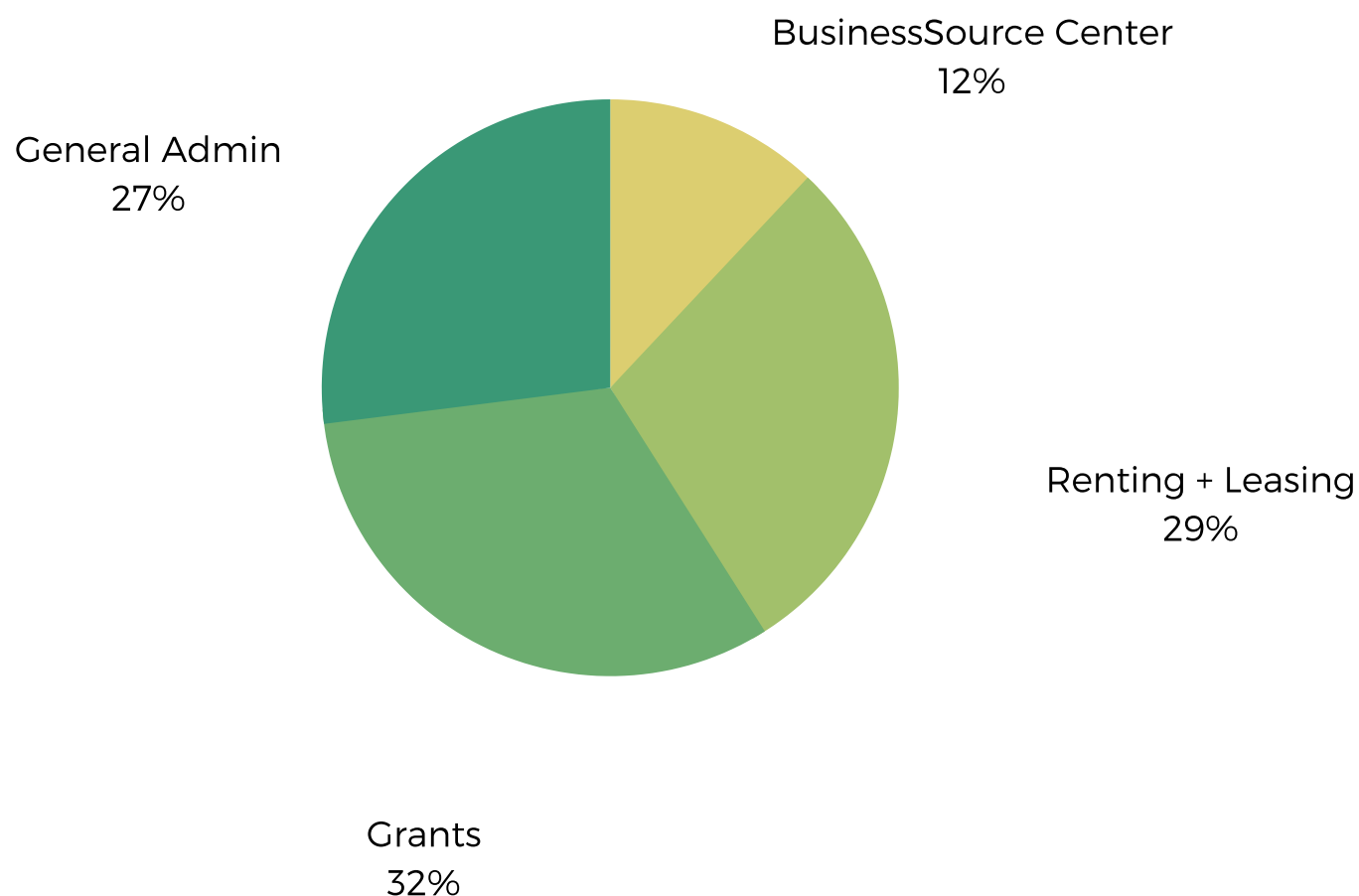
Through diverse funding streams, VSEDC provides seamless support to small businesses and entrepreneurs



GAAP Basis: These interim financial statements for both years are prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

2021 EXPENSES \$4,047,000



GAAP Basis: These interim financial statements for both years are prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

SUCCESS STORY



Established nearly 40 years ago in South LA, Lura's Kitchen is a fully certified home-based bakery. Known for its delectable baked cookies, the business is operated by Lura Daniels-Ball, a lifetime resident of Los Angeles and well-known community member with a longstanding history of advocating for residents.

As the COVID-19 lockdown devastated the economy, her customers were melting away. Lura adjusted her strategy during the pandemic, and reinvested in her business using her own modest savings to test, develop, and perfect the bake cookie mix into three new Premium Gourmet Cookie Mixes: Tura Lura's Chocolate Chip with Pecan, Madear's Old Fashion Teacake Mix, and Langston's No-Nonsense Chocolate Chip.

Struggling to stay afloat, Lura submitted a loan application to VSEDC where she was approved for \$10,000. She used the funds to shift her business model to focus on the sale of mixes, which customers can bake from home. She also purchased quality ingredients for baked-to-order and cake-mix-to-order products, available in an attractive design box and packaging. Her new business model markets to her former clients and existing customers with the goal of landing a partnership with Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, and Lassens.

The South LA BusinessSource Center proudly presented a \$355,000 grant to longtime clients, Roman and Omar Carrillo, to keep their Happy Diners business from closing due to the pandemic. Even prior to the pandemic, the Carrillos faced several barriers such as operating a business under their Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) due to their citizenship status. With a story rooted in dedication and excellence, Roman and Omar joined the industry as dishwashers and bussers before launching to run three successful businesses: Happy Diner #1, Happy Diner #2, and Happy Deli.

To help the Carrillo brothers cope with the financial trauma due to the pandemic, the BusinessSource Center's business coaches informed them that the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was now open to ITIN business owners. Unfortunately, every PPP provider denied their application. With the assistance of VSEDC's business consultants, Roman and Omar did not give up. They continued to search for other opportunities, and soon learned of the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF).

The coaches assisted the Carrillo brothers with the application, and within three weeks, they were approved for a \$264,462 RRF grant. In addition to the RRF grant, they also received additional funding with the assistance from the BusinessSource Center.

The Carrillos remained diligent and hopeful throughout the process, and have since hired new employees as service demand grows. The support VSEDC provided to Roman and Omar did not simply help them survive the economic shutdown— they are thriving.

SUCCESS STORY



SUCCESS STORY

A1 General Merchandise

South LA BusinessSource Center provided a number of business services to Donza Robinson. With street smarts and a driven personality, Donza overcame eight years of homelessness and earned a City College degree, but he needed help to become a street vendor. Undeterred by the pandemic, he officially launched his sidewalk business, A-1 General Merchandise through the assistance he received at VSEDC.

The pandemic put sidewalk vendors in a challenging position, but the BusinessSource team guided Mr. Robinson to obtain the permits required by the City of LA to sell merchandise on the sidewalks. With the assistance of VSEDC staffers Alma Secundino and Adrian Veliz, Mr. Robinson was no longer without hope. He attended workshops during the pandemic, created a business plan, and launched his website. All of which set him up to be ready to apply for grants and a micro loan to expand and grow his business, with Business Coach Terry Gubatan's guidance.

VSEDC salutes Mr. Robinson for pursuing his academic and professional dreams in the midst of a pandemic.





Attorney Robert "Bob" Brown
President, University of West Los Angeles

***"VSEDC WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO ACHIEVE THE
MILESTONES OVER THESE LAST
FEW YEARS. WE ARE DEEPLY
INDEBTED TO THE BROWNS."***

--Joseph T. Rouzan III

THE GIFT OF PARTNERSHIP



Many outstanding individuals have offered their time and effort to further our mission, gifting us with expertise and knowledge to facilitate development. Among the first people to assist VSEDC is Real Estate Attorney Robert "Bob" Brown, a native Angeleno who carries a passion and duty to utilize his business and law skills to advance South LA.

"I was involved with VSEDC when it was still under the leadership of Marva. I go back to her original tenure," said Bob. "As a matter of fact, she actually consulted me on the formation of the organization, almost at its inception."

In 2018, Bob returned to work with VSEDC to provide pro bono legal counsel to help VSEDC's Board of Directors understand its role and authority. As general counsel, he believes the role bears the responsibility to ensure it brings together different facets of an organization.

"I reached out to Bob three years ago and asked him to consider being the Legal Counsel for VSEDC," said Joseph T. Rouzan III, VSEDC's President & CEO. "Since then, Bob and his son, Attorney Talon Brown, have provided hundreds of hours of pro bono legal services to VSEDC. In particular, the Browns' guidance with Board matters has been immeasurable. Without their help, VSEDC would not have been able to achieve the milestones over these last few years. We are deeply indebted to the Browns."

Bob currently serves as President of the University of West Los Angeles (UWLA), a law school based in Inglewood, where he is fortunate enough to work with his daughter and two sons. His son, Talon Brown, Esq., joins his father to provide pro bono legal work, and his strong desire to support the community serves as his fuel.

"I was already interested and really wanted to be part of it. And so, as we dove into some of the opportunities and things going on, it became a priority to me how important VSEDC is to communities. Personally, it is one of my favorite legal projects."

With his family by his side, Bob hopes his services will lead to equitable opportunities for all. He hopes that the services he provides to the South LA community will advance opportunities for the youth and allow them "to create their own pursuit of happiness."

ECONOMIC ADVOCACY IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES & LA COUNTY

BUILD. EMPOWER. THRIVE.

**NEW PARTNERS HELP ENHANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN
SOUTH LOS ANGELES. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN JOIN
OUR EFFORTS, PLEASE CALL US OR EMAIL US TO ARRANGE A VISIT.**



Vermont Slauson Economic Development Corporation

1130 West Slauson Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90044
323.753.2335

www.vsedc.org

This Report Is Sponsored By

Citi Foundation

