

# COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



## CASE STUDY

### NYSBC Educates and Motivates Business Owners to move away from Harmful Chemicals

The New York State Sustainable Business Council (NYSBC) is an alliance of more than 1,500 business organizations and businesses committed to advancing a vibrant, just, and sustainable economy in the State. NYSBC is the New York State affiliate of the American Sustainable Business Council (ASBC).

In 2015, NYSBC launched Companies for Safer Chemicals New York, creating a specialized database of businesses willing to take action on preventing pollution from toxic chemicals. Building on that success, NYSBC has continued to mobilize and educate on values-based businesses and support them to provide their own business voice on critical sustainability issues and provide resources to help them implement their values.

#### Challenge

NYSBC aims to reduce usage of chemicals that contribute to human and environmental harm. Chemicals of concern include many flame retardant chemicals, per- and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances (PFASs), bisphenols and other endocrine disruptors, volatile organic compounds including formaldehyde, and heavy metals. These chemicals have credible scientific research documenting their contribution to a number of high-profile health problems, including learning and developmental disabilities, infertility, cancer, asthma, and heart disease, as well as environmental impacts including aquatic toxicity.

#### Solution

NYSBC educates and motivates business leaders on the benefits of selecting safe materials and chemicals, along with concrete strategies for reducing reliance on chemicals that contribute to human and environmental harm including:

- Prompting NYS businesses to engage in specific efforts to reduce toxic chemicals in the workplace;
- Producing and sharing educational materials for use beyond the term of this project;
- Connecting like-minded businesses with one another, with project partners (e.g., NYSBC, CHNY, and NYSP21), and with relevant services (certifications, chemical footprint project, etc.).

#### Results

NYSBC engaged more than 8,000 New York State businesses (greatly exceeding their original target of 1,000) that self-identified as being concerned with sustainable practices and products; this included a promotional plan and materials, web pages, materials distributed, and an outreach database developed for the project.

#### CHALLENGE

- To reduce usage of chemicals that contribute to human and environmental harm.

#### SOLUTION

- NYSBC aims to educate and motivate business leaders on the benefits of selecting safe materials and chemicals by engaging with businesses, providing educational materials, and connecting them with like-minded businesses.

#### RESULTS

- NYSBC educated over 100 businesses about toxics reduction.
- NYSBC compiled and maintained a database of trained companies to share with New York State Pollution Prevention Institute including steps taken to address pollution prevention and expertise in safer materials selection.



## CONTACT INFO

HILARY BAUM  
Policy Director  
917-822-9445  
hilarybaum@gmail.com  
nyssbc.org

NYS Sustainable Business Institute  
126 The Commons  
Ithaca, NY 14850

Over 100 businesses were educated about toxics reduction including how to assess current chemical use, resources for making changes, and common first steps. This was done through workshops, webinars, and creating and disseminating a collection of business oriented resource documents.



Finally, NYSBC compiled and maintained a database of trained companies to share with the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSPI) including steps taken to address pollution prevention and expertise in safer materials selection. In addition, the site contains case studies of real innovators to inspire interested businesses.

NYSBC pushed their surveying and findings to the limit to gain key insight. NYSBC noticed that their electronically distributed survey was not gaining the traction they had hoped, so they followed up with those engaged by phone. NYSBC learned that some of the survey questions were confusing to attendees; for example, they said via phone that they loved the workshop and were very likely to recommend it, but were surprised to hear they had given it negative ratings (they marked '5' thinking it meant 'very likely' when it meant 'not likely'). Had NYSBC not followed up by phone, they would have had poor response rates and inaccurate results.

NYSBC also learned, through speaking with workshop hosts and testing different language through webinar marketing, that people are less motivated to 'reduce hazardous chemicals' than they are to 'protect their staff and customers'. As a result, NYSBC shifted their marketing to adopt the latter messaging and are considering continuing to test the language.

As far as event follow-up, NYSBC found they had waited too long and that people were surprised to hear from them. In the future, they intend to follow up immediately after each event, check in, solicit near term goals, and then schedule a time later to talk.

**Online Media:**

- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)

## TESTIMONIAL

"This project was challenging, fulfilling, and inspiring. It is clear that the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute places great importance on the long term change we inspire as well as the opportunities we create for our own organizations. We have built new partnerships and inspired systemic change. As we conclude this project, it very much feels like a beginning."

– Bob Rossi

Executive Director

New York Sustainable Business Council

## NYSP2I PARTNERS



New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership

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### For more information please contact us:

111 Lomb Memorial Drive, Bldg. 78  
Rochester, NY 14623

Tel: 585-475-2512

Web: [nysp2i.rit.edu](http://nysp2i.rit.edu)

E-mail: [nysp2i@rit.edu](mailto:nysp2i@rit.edu)

