



ASSOCIATION OF  
WOMEN'S  
BUSINESS  
CENTERS



2023

# ANNUAL REPORT

[WWW.AWBC.ORG](http://WWW.AWBC.ORG)

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# CEO Report



## Corinne Goble

According to Wikipedia, the number one most listened to track of 2023 was "Flowers" by Miley Cyrus. The song begins characterizing a romantic relationship singing, "We were good, we were gold. Kinda dream that can't be sold." To me this is the essence of women's business centers' relationships with their clients in 2023; and the impact we've had with small businesses is pure gold...of a value it can't be sold. Then, Miley goes on to sing about asserting a new independence... she can "buy herself flowers," "write her name in the sand," and more.

Similarly, this year many women's business centers found the courage to assert themselves and to identify what they need to be even more successful through the inaugural National WBC of Excellence program. And, in July, the national network made its mark in Washington DC (as memorialized on the cover of this report) processing from the conference hotel to the capitol steps and then into an historic Senate Small Business Committee hearing presided by retiring Chairman Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Vice Chairwoman Joni Ernst (R-IA). Perhaps most notable was how the WBCs clapped and cheered at key moments during what is traditionally a subdued and serious setting. Women's Business Centers have a reputation on Capitol Hill for enthusiasm, for their voice and for lighting up a room. As your spokesperson, I couldn't be more honored nor humbled to help carry your torch.

The rest of your accomplishments are outshined by the spirit of the women's business centers but certainly worth noting here in this report. We will endeavor to continue to support your capacity to shine this way and to find the funding and other resources to help you do more of this great work and continue to shine a light on the path for women owned businesses nationwide.

Yours truly- and thanks for another incredible year,

*Corinne Goble*



# Advocacy



***In its mission to engage and support the growing Women's Business Center network, AWBC ensured advocacy efforts were a top priority.***

AWBC advocated in support of the passage of a bill, the Women's Business Center Improvement Act of 2023, to modernize and strengthen the SBA's WBC program. The legislation would raise the annual grant funding cap from \$150,000 to \$300,000, ensuring WBCs have more resources to meet the needs of women small business owners for the first time since the program began as a pilot in 1988.

AWBC's advocacy committee, the largest committee of the AWBC Board of Directors, led AWBC through its monthly meetings as well as a March Fly-in and the Annual Leadership Conference Fly-In event in Washington, D.C. in July 2023.

## **Highlights Include:**

- Secured bipartisan support for record funding for the program at \$27 million
- Expanded policy priorities into topical issues important to women business owners including intellectual property, trade and the role of technology in entrepreneurship

Women's business centers and small businesses made for record attendance at the Senate Small Business Committee hearing the same week as the Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C.



Watch the live hearing from July 26, 2023  
[Pathways to Women's Entrepreneurship:](#)  
[Understanding Opportunities and Barriers](#)





# SBA Women's Business Summit

In March 2023, President Joe Biden invited AWBC's Board of Directors to the White House in conjunction with the second annual Small Business Administration (SBA) Women's Business Summit. He announced the expansion of the Women's Business Center network and introduced SBA Administrator Isabella Casillas Guzman, along with an esteemed panel of female entrepreneurs.



AWBC was a proud co-sponsor of the 2023 SBA Women's Business Summit.

Clients of Women's Business Centers exhibited and sold products during the reception.



# International Women's Day Reception



AWBC hosted Women's Business Centers (WBC), partners, supporters, and honored guests from across the nation in celebration of International Women's Day during a reception sponsored by T-Mobile.

More than 150 business owners, legislators and staff commemorated this inaugural event. Department of Commerce Under Secretary Kathi Vidal (pictured left) provided opening remarks.



Representative Greg Landsman (D-OH)



Representative Shri Thanedar (D-MI)



Representative Lisa McClain (R-MI)



Representative Chris Pappas (D-NH)





# Small Business Administration Visit



On Friday March 10, 2023, Women's Business Center leadership from 8 states met with senior leadership at the Small Business Administration, including SBA's Senior Advisor for COVID Recovery Programs to the Administrator - Diedra Henry-Spires, Associate Administrator of the Office of Entrepreneurial Development - Mark Madrid, Senior Policy Advisor of the Office of Capital Access - Veronica Pugin, and the Acting Associate Administrator of the Director of the Office of Liquidation, Office of Investment - Thomas G. Morris. These meetings explored priorities of the WBC program, the Small Business Administration, and opportunities for collaboration to further support entrepreneurship for women.



To close out the fly-in, attendees met with the Associate Administrator of the Office of Government Contracting and Business Development Bibi Hidalgo to discuss ways to enhance certification and procurement opportunities for women owned businesses.



# Legislative Visits

AWBC's Board, Advocacy Committee and Advocate-Connect-Engage (ACE) program participants took to Capitol Hill to meet with policymakers and staff to educate policymakers on the WBC program. Over 40 meetings were conducted with representation from WBCs in 15 states.

Discussion topics explored child care, access to capital, increasing operating costs, WBC Program modernization, funding, financial training and more.



Representative Aaron Bean (R-FL)



Representative Juan Vargas (D-CA)



Representative Jonathon L. Jackson (D-IL)



Representative Jennifer McClellan, (D-VA)



Representative Julia Brownley, (D-CA)



Staff Director Meredith West, Office of  
Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA)





# Annual Leadership Conference

In July 2023, The Association of Women's Business Centers hosted their annual Leadership Conference in Washington, DC. The conference was a celebration of the 25th Anniversary of AWBC, and the 35th Anniversary for the Women's Business Centers.

## Impact and Highlights:

**320** Record attendance from Women's Business Centers, host organizations, and partners from across the nation

**91%** AWBC membership attendance

**49** Mainstage and breakout presentations



# Membership Engagement



AWBC enriched its development opportunities by delivering comprehensive, data-driven education and engagement offerings in order to provide high-quality learning and networking opportunities. Participant feedback from the annual membership survey expressed a desire to stay informed, learn best practices, gather resources, and stay current with topics and issues affecting WBCs.

## Member Engagement Highlights:

- Introduced the Rural Coalition to convene bi-monthly for virtual trainings designed for Rural WBCs
- Launched WBC of Excellence with Dutch Bros Foundation graduating 36 WBCs
- Rebranded the the member-only monthly open forum from “Gather & Grow” to WBC Connect and engaged WBC Directors to spotlight featured topics each month
- Facilitated various educational webinars and information sessions (over x hours of collective training and interaction between WBC members, resource partners, and small businesses)

## 2023 Annual Leadership Conference - Washington D.C.

- Record-breaking attendance at **320**
- **87** total meetings with legislators & congressional staff members
- **49** total educational and networking sessions





# Capacity Building

**In 2023, AWBC dispersed over \$265,000 to Women's Business Centers in efforts to build capacity and cultivate sustainability for its members across the nation.**



## Highlights:

- Collaborated with the Dutch Bros. Foundation to launch the WBC of Excellence program graduating 36 Women's Business Centers
- Awarded Women's Business Centers with a total of \$265,00 in sub-grant funding in efforts to partner and distribute free digital learning resources to small business and entrepreneurs through the Verizon Small Business Digital Ready (VSBDR) program, in partnership with Verizon.
- Partnered with Ewing Kauffman Marion Foundation to award 10 Women's Business Centers with a total of \$100,000, with the purpose of delivering advocacy training on four key areas where women face barriers to entrepreneurship.



# National WBC Impact

Women's Business Centers report performance and client impact data to the SBA throughout their grant period into the Enterprise Data Management and Information System (EDMIS) System. The impact data reported below is a result of data reported from SBA's Office of Women Business Ownership (100% WBC participation).

## 2023 by the Numbers

WBCS REACHED **87,900** CLIENTS IN 2023  
COMPARED TO 84,151 IN 2022

**70%** WERE WOMEN



**3,431** NEW BUSINESS STARTS

**13,233** CAPITAL TRANSACTIONS IN 2023  
COMPARED TO 8,363 IN 2022



**179,281** JOBS SUPPORTED



# Outreach



***AWBC is thrilled to see more people engaging with our communications. Our WBCs and clients are staying in the loop with our monthly newsletters and timely advocacy updates, which now feature more opportunities for involvement than ever before.***

## **Communication Highlights:**

- 92 WBCs participated in the Annual Membership Survey
- 45% open rate (8% above the industry engagement average)
- 10 published articles on the AWBC Press page, including timely advocacy updates and WBC success stories
- Revamped members-only Facebook Group
- Launched members-only LinkedIn Group



# Featured Testimonials



LaDarby Landry-Williams is the owner of Germ Slayers, a Louisiana-based firm providing surgery-level sanitation for workplaces across the Gulf Coast. She became a client of the in 2023 and in just one-year has taken advantage of a number of the Center's training classes and business advising services. Since becoming a client of ULLA, her revenue has increased by over 1000% and she has hired more than 26 contract workers to support new projects.

In November of 2023, Landry-Williams was selected to participate in ULLA's 2023 Women in Business Challenge: Scale Up!. This annual pitch competition features four finalists who pitch their plans to grow and scale for a chance to win \$10,000. During the event, an esteemed panel of judges is tasked with determining the winner based on effectiveness of the pitch presentation, scalability of the business model, and proposed use of award funds. In 2023, LaDarby Landry-Williams emerged as the winner of the competition securing \$10,000 to grow her business.

## **LaDarby Landry-Williams, Owner, Germ Slayers**

Urban League of Louisiana's (ULLA) Women's Business Center Client

Mirna Guardiola is the founder of Mujerbrave, an online store specializing in selling leather bags adorned with embroidery skillfully crafted by Mexican artisans. Mirna connected with the San Diego and Imperial Women's Business Center (WBC) to where she began to attend classes and receive business counseling.

"Thanks to the San Diego Women's Business Center for their invaluable support, 1-on-1 counseling, and the informative classes, I was able to boost my sales significantly." - Mirna Guardiola.

The support she received from the WBC assisted her with a marketing strategy to increase sales by \$11,000 annually. This strategy involved growing her social media following, implementing promo codes, and creating engaging content.



**LMirna Guardiola, Owner and founder, Mujerbrave**  
San Diego and Imperial Women's Business Center Client





# Small Business Digital Ready

Connecting entrepreneurs & small business owners to the resources and community available on the Verizon Small Business Digital Ready platform. Powered by the national network of 152 Women's Business Centers and the HOPE2Women community

## 2021-present by the numbers:

- Over **16,000** small businesses registered
- **27%** enrolled in at least one course
- **55** Women's Business Centers received funding
- **8** Veteran's Business Outreach Centers received funding

**Total Investment: \$1,805,000**

Additional impacts include the launch of **HOPE2Women.org**, an community connecting entrepreneurs to personalized business coaching, live events and local community resources, all at NO-COST

**266**

received personalized  
business coaching

**2700**

H2W social  
media followers

**1622**

H2W newsletter  
subscribers



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“The accessibility of the online resources provided on-demand business support, allowing our clients to access the help they needed whenever it was convenient for them.”

-Danette Nyugen, Maryland Women's Business Center

# Advocate, Connect, Engage

From 2022-2023 AWBC initiated an innovative demonstration program called Advocate, Connect, Engage (A.C.E). A.C.E. aimed to empower women-owned small business to advocate for programs and policies that address the unique challenges faced by women and minority owned enterprises. The program was a train-the-trainer model for WBCs to receive training that was then delivered to small businesses in their communities.

## Program Impacts:

- Over **1,220** small businesses received advocacy education
- **60** Women's Business Center staff trained on advocacy
- **465** small businesses engaged with a policymaker directly

**Total Investment: \$500,000**



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“

After participating in the Advocate, Connect, and Engage program, I feel more empowered to help my clients navigate access to capital, regulatory and licensing concerns, and relationship management with their representatives.”

*-Rachel Webber, Center for Women's Entrepreneurship at Chatham*



# National WBC of Excellence

The primary objective of the National Women's Business Center of Excellence Designation is to recognize organizations that demonstrate commitment and efficacy of the mission, vision, and values of their Women's Business Center thereby achieving the greatest outcomes for women owned businesses.

The inaugural National WBC of Excellence program was funded by Dutch Bros Foundation. Over a series of milestones, WBCs worked towards strategic planning, impact and evaluation, customer journey, and developing an excellence promise.

## Program Impacts:

- **36** Women's Business Centers graduated with WBC of Excellence designation
- Representation from **27** states in the inaugural program
- Associate Administrator for SBA Mark Madrid and Assistant Administrator SBA Office of Women Business Ownership, Christina Hale attended the graduation ceremony

**Total Investment: \$100,000**



“Participating in the WBC of Excellence program has been one of the most impactful experiences in my time as a WBC director. To have a dedicated space to explore your center operations, the client experience, and evaluate your program effectiveness alongside your peers across the country is invaluable. Thanks to this program, our center continues to make improvements to better support our entrepreneurial ecosystem, and I feel more plugged into the WBC network than ever before. I am thankful for the hard work of the AWBC staff, and for Dutch Bros Foundation for their investment in the inaugural program.”

**-Austin Goble, Director, REACH Women's Business Center**





HOPE2Women.org was created to connect more entrepreneurs to the national network of Women's Business Centers. Launched in May of 2023, HOPE2Women offers resources, education, capital opportunities, and direct referral services to Women's Business Centers.

# 2023 Impacts

- **328** newsletter signups
- **146** business coaching requests
  - **145** women
  - **80.1%** minorities
  - **32** states represented
- **1,576** Social media followers



## No-Cost Business Coaching

Business mentors across the country provide free small business coaching, from idea to growth.



## Access to Capital

Get connected to diverse avenues of capital for your business like banks, CDFIs, grants, and more.



## Community

Be part of the HOPE2Women network with over 100,000 women served every year.





# Upskilling Grant Program

Designed for small businesses that intend to train and upskill low-wage workers age 50+, this grant program offered by AARP Foundation will reimburse employers up to \$2,000-\$2,500 per employee for training, provided the grantee meets criteria.

## Program Impacts:

- AWBC received **50 applications** from 49 entities self described as small businesses
- Representation from **106** employees aged 50 and over willing to be trained
- Grant required an hourly increase of **\$2.00** per hour or more
- A live event was hosted with the **Tucson, Arizona WBC** to promote and raise awareness of the program

**Total Investment: \$300,000**

**Since 2020, training costs have increased more than 3 fold**

The average cost of training an employee in this program in 2023 was reported at \$2,746 compared to \$2,435.12 in 2022, \$1,710.29 in 2021, and \$862.39 in 2020.



### Demographics of those who applied

- 52% are women-owned
- 43% are minority-owned
- 44% are minority women-owned
- 3% are veteran/service disabled-owned



# Board of Directors 2023

Roberta McCullough, Chair (North Carolina)

Klassi Duncan, Secretary (Louisiana)

Anne Flynn Schlicht, Treasurer (Pennsylvania)

Nicole Liatos, Membership Chair (Ohio)

Gwen Pokalo Hart, Capacity Building Chair (Vermont)

Cindy Ramos-Davidson, Governance Chair (Texas)

Ruth Garcia-Corrales (California)

Christy Dauer (North Dakota)

Shara Gibson (Virginia)

Nikki Hahn (New York)

Katty Ibarra, (California)

Sophia Kanaan (California)

Mary Anne Petrillo (California)

Kathryn Rudloff (Florida)

Rana Shanawani (New Jersey)





# Thank You 2023 Partners

AARP Foundation

 ADP

Amazon

Biz2Credit Inc.

 Center Dynamics

Cloverleaf

Dutch Bros Foundation

 Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation

Export-Import Bank of the United States

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

 GrowthWheel

Grow With Google

Gusto

Intuit (QuickBooks)

 Invest in Women Entrepreneurs, Claudia Viek

JP Morgan Chase & Co.

 Mastercard

McDonalds

National Women's Business Council

Outreach Systems, Neoserra

Palo Alto Software/ Live Plan

Small Business Administration (SBA)

Square

 T-Mobile

The CRM Firm

Thryv

Thunderbird School of Global Management (Dream Builders)

 Verizon

Visa

VistaShare/ Outcome Tracker

Wells Fargo



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