

PRESS RELEASE

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The Local Business Institute Launches

The Local Business Institute (LBI) was created in the pandemic summer of 2020 in answer to specific needs of local business and to seize the opportunity to rethink our local economies. LBI is a 501c3 nonprofit based in Austin, Texas and founded by Rebecca Melançon, Julie Niehoff and Vicky Valdez. Together the three principals bring more than 90 years experience in small local business, economic development and local policy.

Part think tank, part national leadership, and part training ground for local leaders and entrepreneurs, the Institute will be home to local leaders from across the country. Through special projects, distance learning, virtual and live conferences, lectures and events, we will work to foster local, national and even global conversations around entrepreneurship and local economies. We will bring substantial resources to students of all ages and in many under-served regions, including many who are not currently engaged in education, policy work or business ownership at all.

Throughout LBI runs a commitment to redefine traditional economic development into community economic development, to rethink economic traditions and to infuse our programming with innovation and excitement. The pandemic is creating the opportunity for a new world. By engaging others to think differently, see the unseen and explore new directions, we can overcome the boundaries that have held us.

Our programs will always be born from community need. Rather than duplicate what others are doing, and doing well, we will focus on what's not being done and create programs to fill that void. This work is done through three divisions:

1. Education—Julie Niehoff, Director
2. Policy & Research—Rebecca Melançon, Director
3. Economic Development—Vicky Valdez, Director

Bios available on request or online: <https://localbusinessinstitute.org/about-us>

MISSION

The Local Business Institute is dedicated to the creation and support of thriving, sustainable local business communities through education, research and community-building programs. Beyond the traditional norms, we advance programs unique in perspective through innovative thinking and exceptional excellence.

GOALS

1. Provide education for local leaders and business owners so they may thrive
2. Create and support sustainable local economic ecosystems
3. Conduct essential research to assist communities and governments in fostering a local economy
4. Redirect traditional economic development to focus on local business and local economies

LBI is a 501c3 nonprofit with a Board of Directors and an Advisory Council. The Advisory Council currently hosts 10 advisors who counsel and assist LBI as needed. Current Advisors include:

Hoover Alexander

Owner, Hoover's Cooking

John Antonelli

Co-Owner & CEO, [Antonelli's Cheese Shop](#)

Eric Groves

Co-Founder & CEO, [Alignable](#)

Eileen Keller

CEO & Founder, [Ideality.com](#)

Victoria Musa-Lyons

Owner, [HR Matters Global](#)

Brad Napp

Consultant, [Public Affairs Professional](#)

Derek Peebles

Executive Director, [American Independent Business Alliance](#)

Monica Pena

Owner, [MUNDU Media](#)

Della Rucker

Co-Founder & COO, [Econogy](#)

Anissa Starnes

Vice President, Member Engagement; [ACCE](#)