



VALUE LOUISIANA INITIATIVE

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

How Can Louisiana Better Support Sustainable Business Development?

To help answer this question, LifeCity conducted two business leader focus groups in partnership with the Greater New Orleans Foundation and Value Louisiana Initiative to understand the current needs and perceptions regarding opportunities to improve sustainable business development in the region.

Activity

- Hosted two 2-hour focus groups (one group consisted of businesses who are very familiar with sustainability and another group consisted of businesses who were “new” to sustainability)

Method

- Leveraged Technology of Participation (ToP) methods to discuss what was not working, working, emerging and new and innovative (but not yet existing) in supporting sustainable business development.

Participants

- 17 local business owners and managers, from small, medium and large for-profit and non-profit organizations including representation from a variety of industries including restaurant, retail, manufacturing, energy services, law, entertainment, finance and marketing.

Defining Sustainability

At the beginning, each focus group was asked to define **sustainability**. In the “New to Sustainability Group,” longevity and not harming resources was a common theme; whereas the “Familiar with Sustainability Group” focused more on progress and growth involving a balance of intent towards profit and impact on the community and environment. See a sample of individual definitions of sustainability taken at the beginning of each focus group below.

GROUP 1: FAMILIAR WITH SUSTAINABILITY

- “Sustainability means endurance in natural resources, for a business, and for each person. Action for sustainability must be diverse and focus on all these areas”
- “It means doing your little part to benefit the greater whole”
- “Mindful consumption and coordination of shared resources”

GROUP 2: NEW TO SUSTAINABILITY

- “Environmental (Not harming the environment), social and economic impacts for the community and future”
- “Having a lifestyle or business environment that has little to no impact on the environment”
- “Good practices that lead to economic and social security and longevity”

Reflections on the Ecosystem for Sustainable Business Development

After individual brainstorming and pair discussions, the pairs posted their top 2-5 ideas for each category on the board (highlighted items). The overarching themes of ideas shared are displayed below. The capitalized/yellow boxes were discussed and voted on as the most important from both groups.



Top Priorities	Description
Greater Collaboration & Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase people and businesses working together • Leverage small active and collaborative community groups • Improve coordination across small groups
Government Leadership with Public Resources & Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift government leader mindset and policy language to support sustainability • Enhance local government incentives to identify priorities
Mutually Beneficial Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate partnerships through community engagement • Enable an online platform where people and businesses can share resources to meet needs
Educated Consumers & Decision Makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote value of businesses' impacts beyond profit • Innovate mass communication • Promote awareness of long-term economic consequences of impact
Business Leadership Within Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue business engagement in community and support of sustainable suppliers • Empower owners to drive sustainability solutions at their business • Recruit large, well-known businesses to champion movement
Access to Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate banks and foundations on value of sustainability • Encourage institutions to demonstrate their value of sustainability in their lending
Impact Metric Consensus & Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the City and existing networks to prioritize impact areas • Incentivize organizations to accomplish community goals • Hold organizations accountable through consistent metrics