



Ulster Green Economy Network

2022-2023

YEAR ONE REPORT



**Sustainable
Hudson Valley**

PO Box 145

Rhinebeck, NY 12572

<https://sustainhv.org/>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Program Overview	2
Data Collection and Inventory	4
Launch of UGREEN	8
Suite of Services and Resources	11
Certification Program	12
Live Events and Informational Workshops	14
Program Timeline	17
Outcomes and Deliverables	21
Reporting	24
Discussion and Conclusion	25
Acknowledgments	28
Appendices	29

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Hudson Valley, (SHV) “The Firm,” was selected to work with Ulster County to design and implement a vision that originated with the Ulster County Economic Development Alliance (UCEDA), and other county stakeholders: the Ulster Green Economy Network (UGREEN). UGREEN was conceived as a free-to-join business to business network to grow the marketplace and serve as a channel of communication with county leadership. A one-year contract – renewable for up to two more years at the County’s discretion – was created to guide SHV’s development of UGREEN’s membership and programming. The contract was built around the goals of achieving 500 members by Year 3 and leading at least 16 businesses to undertake substantial green initiatives through referral to the affiliated Green Business Champions Program, which had already been designed by the Department of the Environment.

At the close of Year 1, UGREEN has 113 members representing a wide range of industries and the entire geography of Ulster County, and has made five referrals to the Green Business Champions program.

This report summarizes the work performed, outputs, outcomes, key strategic decisions, lessons learned and recommendations for building on the foundation established in Year 1 of the Ulster Green Economy Network.

County Executive Jen Metzger speaking at The Green Business Innovators of Ulster County Awards Celebration



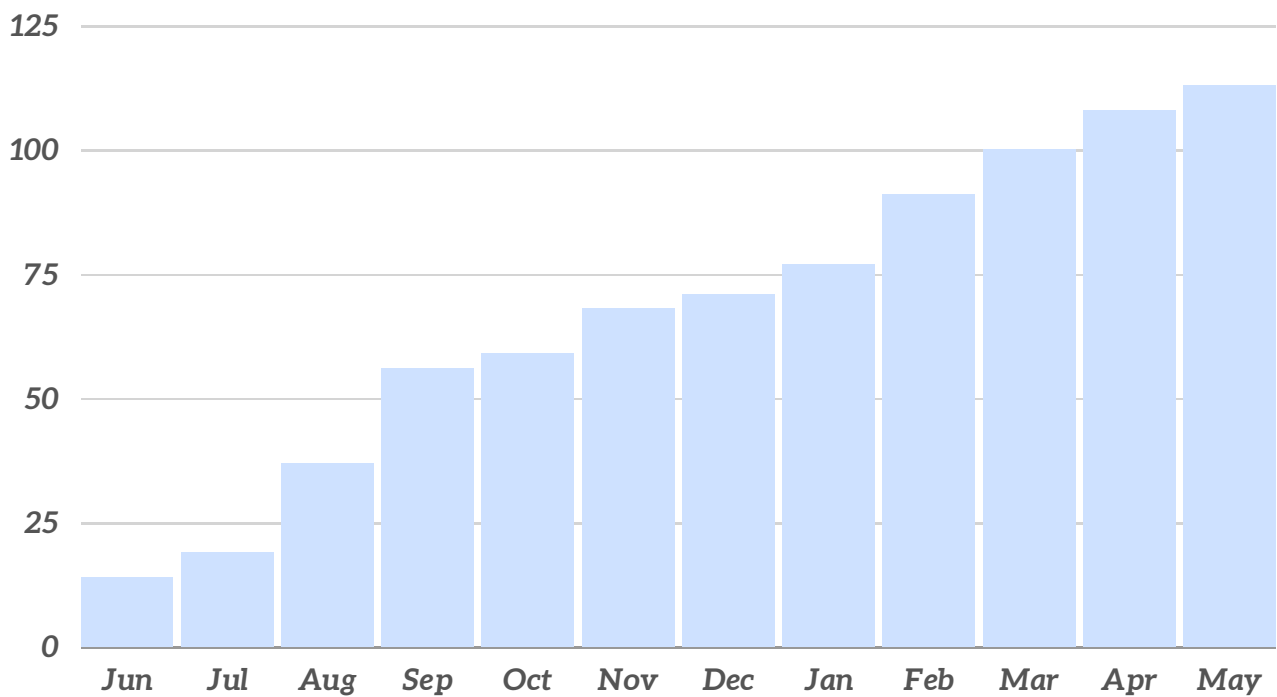
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The program was developed and implemented by SHV with substantial support from Ulster County's Office of Economic Development and Office of Employment and Training, as well as from the SUNY New Paltz School of Business.

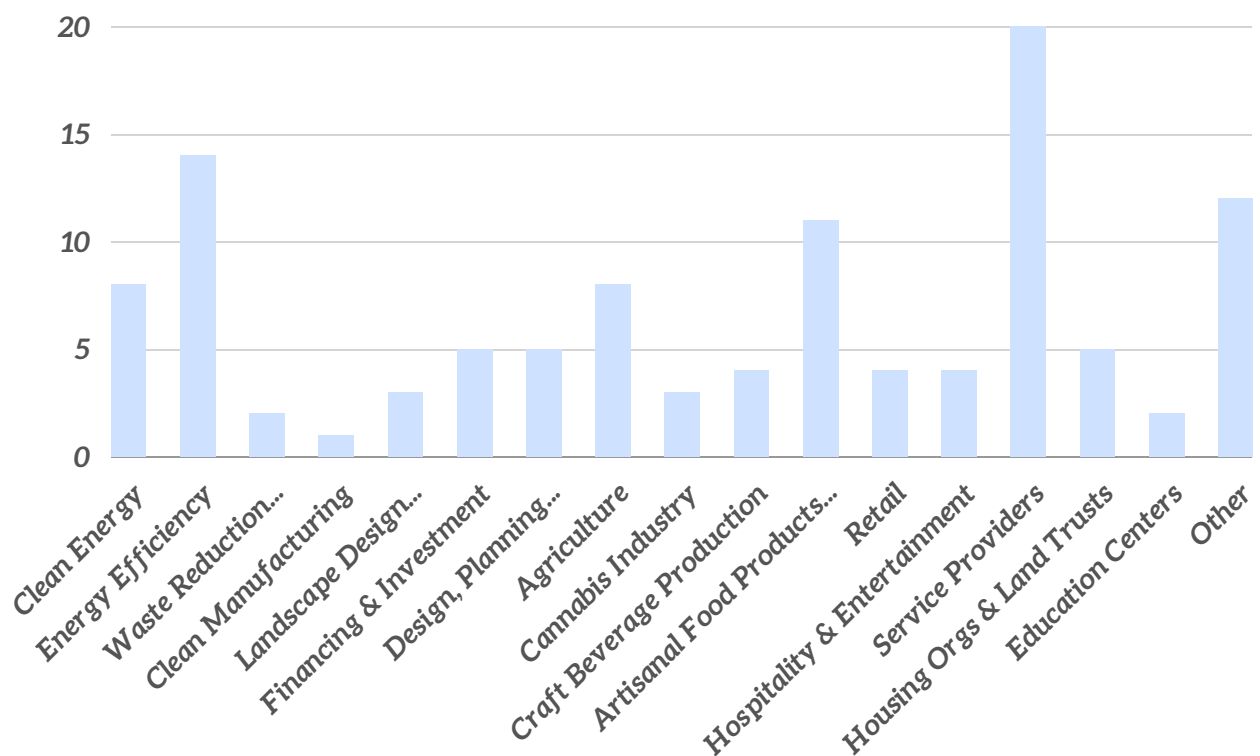
An initial inventory of candidate member businesses was conducted in the summer of 2022, following the mutually agreed approach of identifying search terms and seeking existing directories where available, and otherwise relying on search engines. This was followed by two focus groups and a picnic event in September launching the program. Outreach activities throughout the year included presentations to local business associations, tabling at relevant events, and canvassing several Main Street business districts with a postcard flyer containing a QR code linking to the web form to sign up for UGREEN.

As businesses began to join the network, monthly mixers and regular webinars were the key offerings to engage them, along with a monthly e-newsletter. With membership growth, the newsletter was expanded to include a substantial Member News section. SHV represented UGREEN at various events such as the County's Workforce Development Summits, a cannabis industry summit, and the County Chamber's annual business showcase. Steps were taken early to become knowledgeable on green careers training resources and delve into members' needs through the webinar we produced, "Talking Workforce."

As the initial year neared an end, all focus was directed towards the Green Business Innovators of Ulster County Awards Celebration to showcase the accomplishments of the Champions program, and this network's role as a support system for businesses and bridge-builder with County institutions.



UGREEN Membership Growth by Month, Year 2022-2023



UGREEN Membership by Sector, End of Year One

DATA COLLECTION AND INVENTORY

The year's work began with review of the existing three-tiered Green Business Champions Certification Program and discussion with the Department of the Environment to identify essential categories of green business. This included both "supply side" industries that provide products and services to reduce environmental impact (clean energy, waste reduction, water efficiency, etc) and "demand side" industries that can meaningfully reduce the footprint of Ulster County's economy by adopting these green practices and have reasons to do so (such as hotels, restaurants restaurants and entertainment venues that can differentiate themselves in the marketplace through these innovations).

Green Business Inventory

A Green Business Inventory was performed by establishing search criteria and accessing relevant lists of potential businesses for dedicated outreach, and to provide Ulster County with a snapshot of the green economy in 2022. Sectors were defined to include, but not be limited to, categories of focus for the Green Business Champions Program. Search terms were identified to target businesses in these sectors, in Ulster County. Wherever possible, existing directories were consulted (e.g. NYSERDA approved energy efficiency and renewable energy contractors). In addition, Internet searches were conducted using the search terms plus "Ulster County NY".

Business names and details were gathered and reviewed by project advisor Michael Sheridan, Ph.D. with the assistance of interns Bruce Dunsmore and Cody Sheridan. The inventory covered the entire County.

The following business categories were covered:

Supply Side:

- Clean Energy
- Energy Efficiency
- Sustainable Transportation
- Water Efficiency and Conservation
- Waste Reduction Technologies and Recycling Services
- Clean Manufacturing
- Landscape Design and Management Services
- Financing and Investment
- Design, Planning, Consulting and Support Services

Demand Side:

- Agriculture
- Cannabis Industry
- Restaurants
- Craft Beverage Production
 - Breweries
 - Distilleries
 - Wineries
 - Cideries
- Artisanal Food Products, Catering, and Food Distribution
- Supermarkets and Grocery Stores
- Retail
- Hospitality
- Service Providers
- Housing Organizations and Land Trusts
- Education Centers

A final report of this inventory, "Understanding Ulster County's Green Economy," is available in Appendices 9A and 9B.

Additional companies were added whenever the Firm discovered a business that was newly formed or newly relocated to Ulster County. Final count of companies in the inventory was 323.

Focus Groups and Green Business Summit

Drawing on lists of businesses identified in this Inventory - especially "supply side" businesses aligned with the County's priorities such as clean energy - we invited participation in two focus groups. They were designed with identical guiding questions, intentionally open-ended, qualitative questions to gain an initial understanding of the range of participants' thoughts:

- Briefly, what comes to mind when you hear the words 'green economy'?
- How would you sum up the conditions in Ulster County for a healthy green economy? Include both what you see as favorable and unfavorable aspects of the business and policy climate.
- What specific policies and programs could the County adopt that would strengthen the favorable conditions and reduce the barriers to a thriving green economy?

The first Focus Group was a stand-alone, one-hour session Sept. 12, 2022 via Zoom. The second was a segment in a full day Green Economy Summit held September 15, 2022 at SUNY New Paltz with support of the SUNY School of Management. This event was a bridge between the data collection/ strategy and launch phases of the initiative. It featured panels of entrepreneurs and workforce development innovators, and extensive breakout discussions on the County's potential role in growing the green economy.

Notes from these focus groups are provided as Appendices 3A, "UGREEN Focus Group 1," and 3B, "UGREEN Focus Group 2."

Participants had plenty to say on all topics. Representative comments included:

- "We need an army of building science professionals."
- "People are hurting; we need to invest in our youth."
- "There is a blue collar work force crisis."
- "There is no mechanism for sorting out quality concerns and consumer issues for green products and services, and that would be very valuable."

Views were diverse, but common themes included the need for economic, technical and strategic support, including access to resources (expertise, services and products, and county "powers that be" to gain a sense of the direction of local policy.

In terms of conditions for growth of the green economy, the County was credited by several speakers for being forward-thinking and genuine in its commitments. Key challenges in terms of Ulster County conditions for green economy were clearly identified as work force, housing and transportation, as well as lack of connection of green building and renewable energy companies and organizations with each other, with important markets such as work force housing, and with government. Supply chain issues were mentioned but not specified. Local laws regarding solar zoning, composting and other sustainable practices were described as mixed.

*Participants in a Focus Group
at the Green Economy
Summit*



Actionable highlights of the focus group conversations included the following recommendations:

- Create a one-stop center for businesses seeking to access NYSERDA, NY Green Bank, Energy Improvement Corporation Federal and NYS funding
- Work with training providers to expand and market micro-credentials (recognizing SUNY Ulster's existing offerings)
- Develop a 2 year building science degree and micro-credentials for various building retrofit skills
- Connect the adaptive reuse of old buildings with the demonstration of innovative green products and practices
- Monitor and support innovative fields moving rapidly into the mainstream (e.g. hemp insulation)
- Zero waste in tourism could be low-hanging fruit because the businesses can cover costs of recycling/ composting and they gain market share by demonstrating best practices
- Review local laws connected with materials management, renewable energy and other sustainable practices and provide technical assistance to municipalities to adopt best practices
- Develop a specific fund for green business expansion
- Create incentives for adaptive reuse of abandoned properties
- Produce regular economic collaboration forums
- Explore innovative financial incentives to offset the increased costs of sustainable practices (e.g. a variation on Payment in Lieu of Taxes in which a business could apply for tax benefits to offset costs, with a transparent and consistent set of rules)
- Require institutions and governments to meet green standards as a way to build the market

LAUNCH OF UGREEN

The first three months of Year One, June through August, were spent in creating a foundation for growth through background research and initial membership invitations to entrepreneurs who were trusted to be strong connectors and establish credibility at the outset. The core strategy of this initial period was to pull in diverse early adopters with strong networks, representing a broad spectrum of priority industries and a wide coverage of county geography. This included relationship building with local stakeholders and early members, and the research and creation of an Ulster County Green Economy Inventory. This inventory broke the green economy sector into 2 major categories, Supply and Demand. The goals of this inventory were firstly, to better understand the local green economy ecosystem, and secondly, to identify potential member businesses for outreach. Categorizing the green businesses by sector created a framework for directing outreach activities broadly across all sectors of the local green economy.

After this initial period, in September, the Network was formally launched, and reached 50 members. In September the first mixer was held. This roughly marks the beginning of a period of regular monthly Mixers and frequent Webinars. These Webinars fulfilled the "quarterly informational workshops" deliverable, and although they were not delivered quarterly, 5 were offered during the contract period. No Webinar was offered during the first quarter; two Webinars were offered in both the third and fourth quarters.

From September 2022 to April 2023, the regular promotion of these Mixers and Webinars was the primary focus of outreach, both to existing members and to potential members. A major strategy was to include promotion of membership alongside the promotion of Mixers and Webinars. In other words, promotion of individual events was always designed to firstly drive turnout to the event, and secondly to remind potential members of the benefits of joining and make it easy for them to do so. Promotion of Mixers and Webinars formed the bulk of UGREEN social media content, which included Facebook, Instagram, and a UGREEN group on LinkedIn. At the end of year one, the UGREEN LinkedIn group has 45 members; it is not highly active but has been used by members to share their news and job openings. The monthly Constant Contact Newsletter also played a major role in promoting Mixers and Webinars, and contains a regular member news section. The Newsletter is sent to roughly 1800-2000 people, with a roughly 45% open rate.

"Green jobs training is a valuable resource, but it's hard for a young person to concentrate if they're sleeping in their car. Support services are essential to make these programs work."

- Dawn Breeze, PlaceCorps

In addition to this central focus on regular events, direct outreach to local businesses was performed through three major outreach campaigns. These three outreach campaigns reached a total of 179 recorded businesses directly and an estimated 50 more businesses at mixers and events:

- **Phone Calling Outreach Campaign**

- From January to April, 76 local businesses were contacted directly via phone with personal invitations to join UGREEN
- In May, 36 members were contacted directly via phone with personal invitations to attend the Awards Celebration

- **QR Code Postcard Canvassing Campaign**

- An outreach postcard was designed and printed for use as a canvassing tool
- The postcard contains a QR code that links directly to the “Join UGREEN” online form
- From March to May, 103 local businesses were contacted directly and given a postcard at their place of business. Most of this canvassing took place on “Main Street” commercial areas with a high density of businesses, in New Paltz, Rosendale and Saugerties

- **In-Person Networking Campaign**

- From January to May, Outreach Coordinator Chrisso Babcock attended 13 local business association mixers, industry mixers, or other trade or networking events to perform outreach and networking for UGREEN, including the Saugerties Chamber, Rondout Valley Business Association, and Ulster Chamber of Commerce
- This networking generated between 40-60 contacts, many of which led to further meetings and new members

- **Other Outreach**

- Tabling at the Ulster Chamber’s annual local business showcase
- A series of email invitations to businesses identified through the inventory
- Cross-enrollment with the Champions program, as membership in UGREEN is automatic for certified green businesses

The Firm has intentionally grown this network in a gradual, deliberate manner. The rationale has been to cultivate highly credible, leading businesses, include wide representation, and to take time to connect the members with one another. The vision has been that as many members as possible will experience unique benefits from UGREEN, as compared with the many other organizations competing for their participation. This should allow for rapid scaling to meet the three-year goals, focusing on sectors that the County most wants to target for growth and bringing out the Green Business Champions program more widely through the partnerships we have established with local business associations. While growth in Year One has been linear, it should be possible to shift into an exponential growth mode by engaging the motivated members as outreach champions.

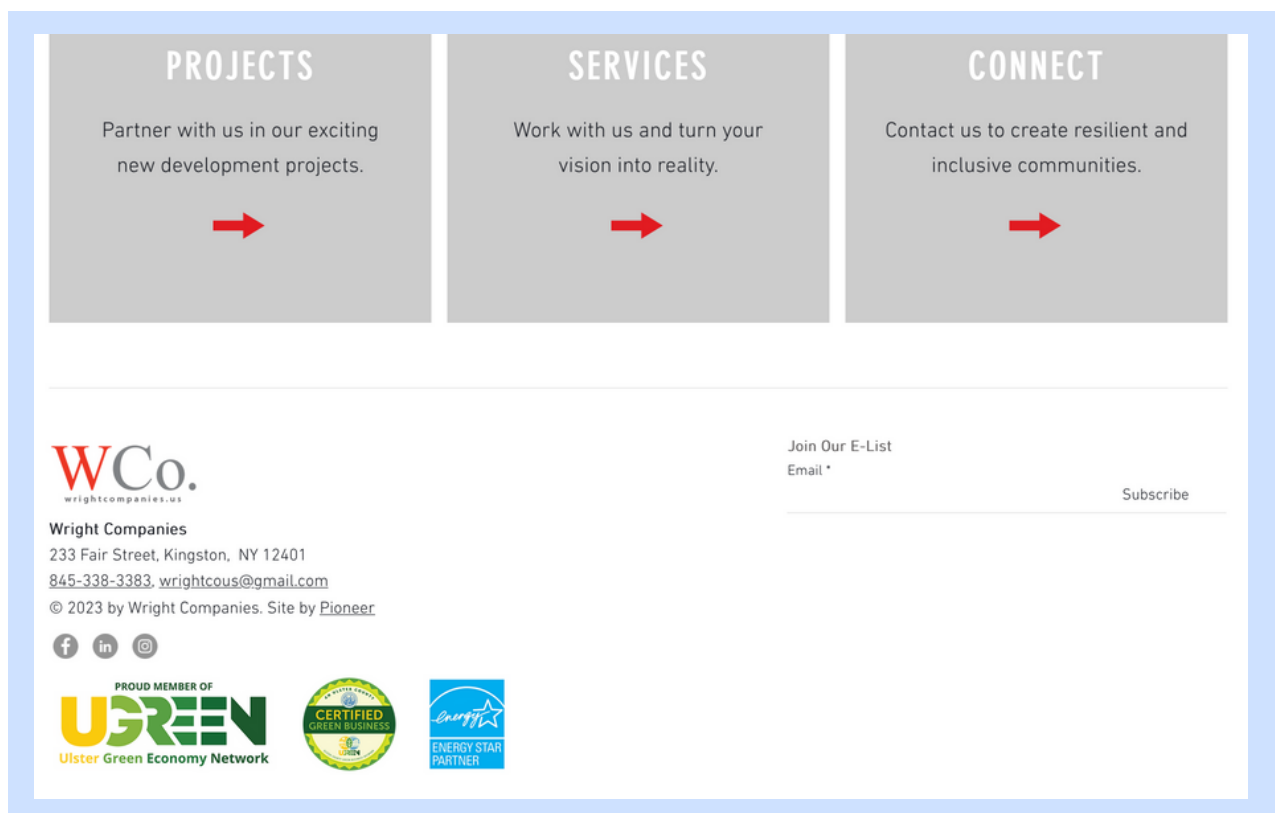
For lists of the businesses reached through the Phone and Canvassing Campaigns, see appendix 8, “Outreach Campaign Lists.”

Effort was made to reach major companies such as Zumtobel and Iron Mountain through contacts on their websites, because these would be valuable members as large employers in the county. However, as they have ready access to technical expertise and easy access to county decision makers, their motivation to join UGREEN may be less than that of our smaller business members.

Another strategy combining outreach and member services and resources was a widget created for display on member websites - "Proud Member of UGREEN:"

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Over the course of the launch and development of UGREEN, the ebbing and flowing of participation and observations gleaned from members increasingly clarified member interests; tracking membership patterns in connection with the use of different tactics made clearer the spectrum of useful methods for outreach and member recruitment. Event branding was tuned to establish a professional yet relaxing ambience. Some outreach tools were tried and shelved - notably a LinkedIn group which did not rise to the top of members' priority lists. Most of the outreach approaches contributed meaningfully to membership growth.



Example of a UGREEN widget on the website of member business Wright Companies

SUITE OF SERVICES AND RESOURCES

The primary service offered to the members of UGREEN has been the opportunity to connect with each other, Ulster County's green economy team, and the expertise provided in the basic programming – Monthly Mixers (*Monthly Hybrid Events*), Webinars (*Quarterly Informational Workshops*), and the Monthly E-Newsletter – as well as regular promotion of the Champions program as a standard part of all events and presentations. The simple UGREEN website serves as a resource with recordings of all webinars, and newsletters include recommended books, webinars and experts.

Aiming to make offerings as comprehensive as possible as the program matures, additional options for resources and services were explored. Sustaine, an innovative energy services company, was an initial partner selected to develop a member benefit using their services. Sustaine performs a comprehensive analysis of business electric bills and recommends a suite of technologies to reduce both cost and carbon footprint. Two members, Stone Dock Golf Course and Soft Power Sweets, tested the service and both reported user-friendly, practical savings recommendations. Stone Dock reported some discrepancy between their goals and the recommendations they received. Further, Sustaine's services do not include any building envelope or energy efficiency assessments, raising a concern about creating the impression that these were not important. A do-it-yourself energy audit app, circulated for piloting by the reputable nonprofit Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership, was tested with member company Green Building Specialists; but it did not pass the user-friendliness test. The tool is being refined by its developers and may be a useful resource in the future in partnership with Sustaine or on its own.

During this exploration phase, numerous businesses that offered these types of energy and financial management services joined the Network, suggesting a more cost-effective approach to develop the business-to-business marketplace aspect of the program: instead of selecting sole providers (who might actually compete with members in some instances) mobilize the members themselves! This could easily be done by creating a marketplace for members to provide these services to each other. At this point, expertise in energy-efficiency, renewable energy, electric vehicle infrastructure, and materials management is well represented in UGREEN's membership. The same is true for environmentally and socially screened employee benefits and philanthropic programs, an offering of at least one current UGREEN member. Because this pattern was recognized well into the first year, as focus was moving toward Phase 1 completion, a high-impact priority for Year Two should be to design an online marketplace – and a signature green products and services expo event – that can promote this member-to-member engagement.

CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Ulster County Green Business Champions Program (UCGBC) supports businesses that wish to decrease their greenhouse gas emissions, improve their energy efficiency, utilize renewable energy, and green their operations. The program was designed to recognize and celebrate businesses that have achieved one or more of these goals, through recognition in the County's media and at special events such as the year-end Awards Celebration. The program was also designed to provide outreach, education, and technical support to its members. UCGBC participants benefit financially from advances in operational efficiency, procurement practices, regulatory compliance, and community connections, while also supporting initiatives to make Ulster County more sustainable. Participants learn how to adopt greener practices, as well as how to save money and improve efficiency.

The Green Business Champions Program certification system is a three tiered system in which specific measures must be achieved and documented, for a business to receive a certification at each level. Businesses complete various environmental measures, in the process receiving 'points' toward a tiered certification of either Partner, Leader, or Champion. This certification system and software is provided by the firm GreenBiz Tracker. There are industry specific measures, and the program works closely with each participant, helping them to understand the program, create goals, and advising them on ways to achieve the measures. Measures are broken into the following categories: Energy, Solid Waste, Transportation, Wastewater, and Community. Within each category are core measures and elective measures. To achieve a given tier, a business must fulfill all of the core measures associated with that tier, as well as completing a number of elective measures from lists of different options. For example, a core measure for Tier 2 Energy is, "Retrofit at least 50% of lighting to energy efficient LEDs or as recommended in lighting audit." An example of an elective measure for Tier 1 Community is, "Do business with another Certified Green Business." In the case of Tier 1 Community, there are 2 core measures and 7 elective measures, of which a business must choose and complete at least 2.

As of the end of May 2023, 17 businesses have been certified at the Tier 1 or Partner level. One business is certified at the Tier 3 or Champion level. These businesses span the sectors of the green economy, including manufacturing, artisanal food production, hospitality, agriculture, energy efficiency, and design and construction.

The Firm is tasked with recruiting 16 businesses into the program by Year 3: 8 selected as “high impact” (large-scale or high-environmental-footprint enterprises) and 8 selected as “high visibility” (such as entertainment, hospitality and food businesses that people visit). The Champions Program was routinely promoted in UGREEN’s newsletter (including a “Portrait of a Champion” feature) and in all presentations at mixers, at the openings of webinars, and in introductions for new members. “Hand-off” of referrals from The Firm to UCGBC was fairly informal, possibly resulting in missed opportunities to make sure that referred businesses’ participation was confirmed.

At the end of year one, 5 businesses have been referred to the UCGBC program: Stone Dock Golf Course, Softer Power Sweets, Rycor, Energy Conservation Services and Cool Down. Stone Dock Golf Course is an active participant that illustrates high visibility; the new owners have committed to using the property as a learning center on sustainability. Softer Power Sweets is an example of high-impact, as a company that is building its own production facility.

Typical accomplishments across the industries have included significant energy efficiency improvements, onsite and community solar, product sourcing, and waste minimization (including some innovative activities, such as a hair salon’s composting of hair trimmings). These details are highlighted in Appendix 5D, “UCGBC Awards Testimonials.”



Michael D'Arcy, Environmental Outreach Manager for the Ulster County Department of the Environment, presents Ulster Savings Bank with a Green Business Innovator Award for their work through the UCGBC program

LIVE EVENTS AND INFORMATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Mixers and Other Live Events:

Mixers began in September with a well-attended picnic (originally scheduled for July but postponed due to excessive heat). This Launch party / Mixer was hosted by the 100% renewable Sun Creek Center celebrating local harvest, with guests including the architect who transformed the facility to Net Zero.

UGREEN events were designed to connect members and guests in a fairly informal setting to explore professional connections and opportunities. Roughly 35% of members attended at least one mixer, webinar, or other event.

Where possible, we hosted the events in noteworthy venues or engaged the venue hosts as members of UGREEN/candidates for the Green Business Champions Program. Venues were chosen for eco-friendly, locally-sourced menus and diverse locations around Ulster County. Some of the events were stand-alone, UGREEN gatherings, while others were designed in collaboration with other organizations for exposure to their audiences as potential UGREEN members and Champions Program participants. These partners included the Gardiner Association of Businesses, the Saugerties Chamber and the Hudson River Maritime Museum, where the October mixer was co-produced with a member who was holding a daylong conference on low-carbon maritime transportation.

Mixers were also held at popular pubs including Keegan Ales, RUNA Bistro, Kingston Standard Brewing Co, The Tavern at Diamond Mills and Dixon Roadside. Attendance ranged from ten to roughly 80, with that high result including the members of the partner organization Gardiner Association of Business. While UGREEN outreach brought in a small portion of that audience, the entire audience heard the introduction to UGREEN and the Champions Program.

While the mixers started small, evidence of enthusiasm and growth potential included the fact that several groups of members came together and brought guests; one business owning couple made the UGREEN mixer their 'date night' several times; and at all the mixers, most participants came at the start time and stayed until the end – or an extra half hour.

For mixer and live event locations by month, consult the "Monthly Focus and Activities" table on page 20.

Webinars: Quarterly Informational Workshops

Webinar topics were based on member expressions of interest in the initial focus groups. Sign up was through Eventbrite, and the most popular of the Webinars had 50 RSVPs and roughly 20 attendees. Recordings of all webinars are available on the UGREEN website:

<https://sustainhv.org/ulster-green-economy-network/>

Talking Workforce

Sharon Williams, Director, Ulster County Office of Employment and Training

Sheldon Jacobovich, Director of Business Development, NYS Solar Farm

Rick Alfandre, President, Alfandre Architecture

Dawn Breeze, Executive Director, PlaceCorps

November 2022

“Talking Workforce” addressed the challenges in attracting, training, managing and advancing the workforce, especially in the sectors poised for dramatic growth through the implementation of NYS’ Climate Law. Two employers, one work force capacity building organization, and the head of the Ulster County Office of Employment and Training discussed the hiring and training stresses directly experienced by members representing key green growth industries. A presentation by PlaceCorps highlighted the need for comprehensive support services to make training opportunities accessible to those who are marginalized or financially struggling. Also confirmed to present was Blacc Vanilla Community Foundation, a highly successful BIPOC-led organization based in Newburgh. BVCF has placed 17 young people in the IBEW’s solar and electrical apprenticeship program using a holistic model that mentors both the young person and the family system; this work is modeled on Homeboy Industries, Los Angeles’ largest gang diversion program. Blacc Vanilla’s team was unable to present due to a last minute visit by Lieutenant Governor Delgado, but they remain in communication with the Firm (and were represented on a panel at the initial Green Economy Summit). Overall strategies for wrap-around services and holistic approaches to mentoring, discussed on this webinar, directly relate to the County’s planned Center for Workforce Innovation.

Funding Clean Energy Projects and Building the Workforce

Part 1: New York State Programs

Adele Ferranti, Director of Workforce Development and Training, NYSERDA

Sarah Smiley, Director of Municipal Membership, Energy Improvement Corporation

Wes Adrianson, Investment & Portfolio Management Associate, NY Green Bank

January 2023

This webinar covered programs and initiatives to support clean energy projects in New York State, and also discussed opportunities to continue building a skilled workforce in the clean energy industry. NYSERDA reviewed its suite of Workforce Development programs including internship, on-the-job training and customized training, and walked through the ways that these programs can be aligned to provide a phased pathway for individuals to receive education, training and work experience. Energy Improvement Corporation and NY Green Bank presented on their lending programs as low-risk and gap financing to support a diverse range of clean energy and energy-efficiency projects.

Funding Clean Energy Projects and Building the Workforce

Part 2: Funding Local Clean Energy Projects with the Inflation Reduction Act

Chase Macpherson, Community Decarbonization Associate, Northeastern Energy Efficiency Partnerships

Aditi Dalal, Energy Policy Associate, Northeastern Energy Efficiency Partnerships

February 2023

The second part of the Clean Energy series covered beneficial tax incentives for small businesses through the IRA, with a focus on resources and grants that small businesses can use to increase energy efficiency. The presentation covered currently open applications, ideas on how to spend the money, and guidance on collaborating with others if bandwidth is an issue. This webinar was a great opportunity for municipalities, businesses, and organizations to learn about the funding and workforce development resources available to them in New York State, and how to best take advantage of them.

EV Charging: Opportunities and Resources

Adam Bosch, CEO, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress

March 2023

Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress presented this webinar on electric vehicle charging and the state of New York's EV charging infrastructure. This comprehensive look at the distribution, quality, costs, and accessibility of EV charging throughout the Hudson Valley was partially designed for business and property owners considering installing a charger. The basis of the discussion was HV Pattern for Progress's just-published study, [Electric Vehicle Charging in the Hudson Valley](#), which analyzes charging distribution and accessibility, and provides recommendations on how to support the growth of EV charging including funding and approaches for multi-family housing.

JobsFirstNYC: Identifying, Building and Advancing What Works

Keri Faulhaber, Vice President, JobsFirstNYC

Megan Marshall, Work Solutions Manager, JobsFirstNYC

April 2023

JobsFirstNYC, an innovative champion of workforce development, presented on their organizational strategy and impact. Their structure is built on subgroups of members by industry, including a Green Economy Network that may provide a model for UGREEN's growth and role. Also highlighted was their use of Skills Mapping – using skills Intelligence to advance workforce development, map talent to jobs, and help workers to upskill and reskill for greater adaptiveness in the labor market.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

June, July and August, the first three months of the contract, were focused on preparation: researching and creating the inventory, organizing the Focus Groups and Green Economy Summit, and interacting with potential members. Building a sense of organizational needs helped to refine the job description for a UGREEN Coordinator; Chrisso Babcock was hired and began work in October. A launch event, initially planned for July, was postponed to September due to extreme heat. September held two in-person events, a Launch Picnic / Mixer and the Green Economy Summit, as well as a focus group held virtually. The season of planning and launch was very much “pandemic time” with widespread concerns about indoor events from a health and safety perspective. Requests were made to the initial members of UGREEN to host events, especially those with visible green facilities or practices; universally, their response was, “Yes – when it’s safer to congregate.” Strategy shifted to a simpler and more consistent model of hosting mixers in pubs and restaurants, at the County’s suggestion. From December on, Mixers were held monthly in venues rotating around the county, in Kingston, Saugerties, New Paltz and Woodstock.

In the six months period from November 2022 to April 2023, UGREEN held five Webinars (Quarterly Informational Workshops) on a variety of topics of interest to green business owners and professionals. The central work of this six month period was organizing and promoting 10 events – five Mixers and five Webinars – and member outreach. This outreach included a direct phone calling campaign; a Main Street canvassing campaign using promotional postcards which included a QR code link to join UGREEN; and a strategy of attending local business association mixers and other industry networking events to do in-person outreach. In March, UGREEN reached 100 members.

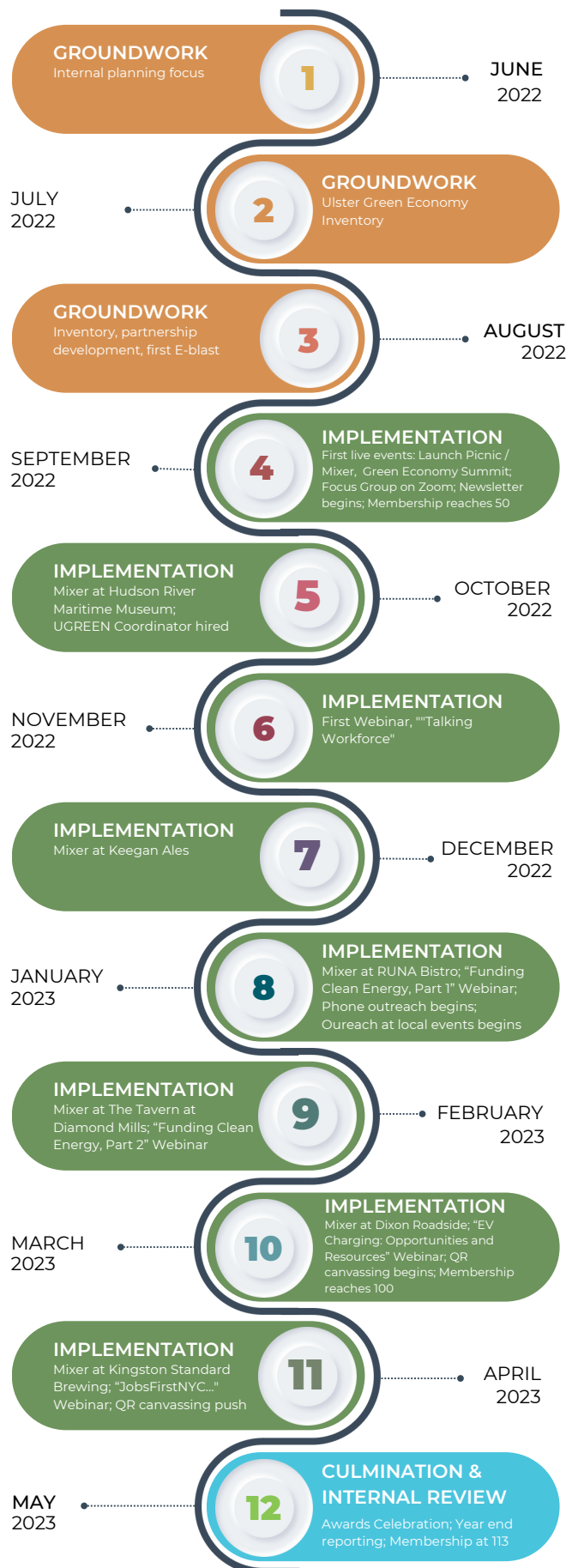


Michael D'Arcy, the Environmental Outreach Manager for the Ulster County Department of the Environment, speaking at a monthly UGREEN Mixer at Keegan Ales in Kingston

Establishing a coherently branded new network with steadily growing membership, in the latter phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, was a challenge that required periodic course-correction, especially in selecting event venues and formats with member safety and comfort in mind. With varying participants and approaches to test possibilities, some events were more formal than others; one became quite informal as guests at the Hudson River Maritime Museum had the opportunity to adjourn to the solar-powered Solaris on the waterfront. After a few months, a consistent style and brand emerged. Doors opened for the outreach team - after a few cycles of knocking. For example, an initial cycle of outreach to all the business associations in Ulster County - by email and phone - resulted in exactly zero responses; a second effort a few months later began to bear fruit, and with help by several of the early UGREEN members, relationships were established with business associations for outreach to their members.

As soon as the April Mixer and Webinar were completed, nearly total focus shifted to the planning and promotion of the Green Business Innovators of Ulster County Awards Celebration. This was a much larger and more complex event any other produced during the year, involving a sit-down dinner and an awards ceremony, six weeks of active promotion including direct phone invitations to a third of the members, and an opening speech by Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger. The event was sold out with 65 RSVPs, and had more than 50 attendees.

UGREEN 2022-2023 TIMELINE



The awards celebration was intentionally designed to “walk the talk,” demonstrating locally sourced food and including the ribbon cutting of Stone Dock Golf Course's new EV charger.

Awards were crafted from recycled materials by prominent artist Suprina Troche, whose work is on display at the Walkway Over the Hudson and who is a passionate sustainability advocate in her personal life.

After the Awards Celebration, work shifted to year end analysis and reporting.



Suprina Troche, multimedia artist with a focus on recycled materials, displays one of the awards she created for use in the Awards Celebration

UGREEN 2022-2023

MONTHLY FOCUS AND ACTIVITIES

MONTH	MEMBERSHIP TOTAL	MIXERS (Monthly Hybrid Events)	WEBINARS (Quarterly Informational Workshops) OR OTHER PROGRAMMING	ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES
June 2022	14			Internal planning focus
July 2022	19			Ulster Green Economy Inventory
August 2022	37			Inventory Continues, First E-Blast
September 2022	56	Launch Picnic / Mixer at member Sun Creek Center	UGREEN Focus Group via Zoom Green Economy Summit	First Mixer and Live Event, First of regular Monthly E- Newsletters
October 2022	59	Mixer at, and co produced by, member organization Hudson River Maritime Museum		
November 2022	68	No live event due to Covid concerns	"Talking Workforce" Webinar	First Webinar / Quarterly Informational Workshop
December 2022	71	Mixer at member business Keegan Ales		Midcourse roundup presentation to T. Weidemann and M. D'Arcy
January 2023	77	Mixer at RUNA Bistro, co produced with Gardiner Association of Business	"Funding Clean Energy, Part 1" Webinar	22 Outreach calls, 1 Business mixer attended, "Member News" section added to E-Newsletter and continues regularly
February 2023	91	Mixer at The Tavern at Diamond Mills	"Funding Clean Energy, Part 2" Webinar	32 Outreach calls
March 2023	100	Mixer at Dixon Roadside	"EV Charging: Opportunities and Resources" Webinar	14 Outreach calls, 3 Business mixers attended, QR postcard outreach begins: 18 QR
April 2023	108	Mixer at member business Kingston Standard Brewing	"JobsFirstNYC: Identifying, Building and Advancing What Works" Webinar	8 Outreach calls, 3 Business mixers attended, 65 QR
May 2023	113	No Mixer due to Awards Celebration	The Green Business Innovators of Ulster County Awards Celebration at member Stone Dock Golf Course	36 calls to invite members to Awards, 6 Business mixers attended, QR 20, "New Members" section added to the E-Newsletter

OUTCOMES AND DELIVERABLES

Outcomes:

While outputs are generally defined as direct, concrete results of work done, outcomes are the fruition of the work as it connects to an organizational purpose. Utilizing the outputs summarized above, the outcomes from Year One's work were expected to be a well-formed network representing diverse businesses that identify as "green" and reflect the breadth of Ulster County's green economy, and this outcome has been achieved. Steady growth in membership, and members' participation in events, were identified as the signs of a successful launch. Inclusion of members representing Disadvantaged Communities, and entrepreneurs of color, was a special priority reflected in the early and active involvement of Build Green Now, Greenway Environmental Services, and Simply Sustainable, among others.

At the close of Year 1, UGREEN has 113 member businesses representing the spectrum of sectors identified in the inventory, and all population centers in the county.

At events and otherwise, the Firm has sought opportunities to introduce and connect members for mutual benefit, and has regularly featured member news items in the monthly UGREEN newsletter. The organizing premise here is to differentiate UGREEN from many other organizations that may compete for bandwidth, by demonstrating the high-value connections it provides from the outset. Resulting collaborations have included:

- Three member businesses teaming to develop a training curriculum
- Five member businesses teaming in a funding application
- One member business working with three others as an expert energy advisor
- One member business using the network to help recruit volunteers for a major zero-waste event
- Members helping to publicize, and volunteering at, a tree planting event as part of a member's renovation and sustainability enhancements
- The Firm was approached by Hudson Valley Magazine for innovative local businesses to feature and landed a cover story for member Build Green Now

In spite of this and several other media opportunities, overall UGREEN's media presence was limited to: a mention in Chronogram Media's Clean Power Guide, a 25-minute segment on Healthy Ulster Radio, and an article in Kingston Wire. Press releases were circulated to announce formation, the 100 member milestone and the Awards Celebration; none resulted in coverage. It is reasonable to expect feature content of this kind to be sidelined during the intense news cycles that have prevailed, but more creativity should be focused on telling the story of UGREEN's innovative and inspiring members. The challenge is increased by the fact that many of these members have already been covered on their own. Still, strategies to test include:

- Social media posts highlighting members' accomplishments and novel offerings
- A collaborative strategy with members, with more emphasis on tagging, following and liking
- More targeted outreach to feature writers, bloggers and radio hosts with a known interest in the subject matter
- More regular posting on high-visibility social platforms including the County's

With the foundation laid with membership and clarity on membership-building tactics, these steps can be easily taken going forward.

A key lesson learned in UGREEN's startup phase is the power of creative entrepreneurs and the willingness of members to step up in support of the network. As the events developed a core audience who attended regularly, members began bringing prospective members, including the core group of the pre-covid ReThink Local Network, one of whom had been exploring the feasibility of creating a regional sustainable business network. Members also shared relevant events for business development and investor connections, notably the Hudson Valley Venture Hub's Collaboration Corner event which attracted several UGREEN members. An end-of-Year-1 update meeting with the Venture Hub was held via Zoom to confirm the commitment to cross-promotion of services. As Year One was ending, UGREEN Advisor Michael Sheridan, Ph.D., SUNY New Paltz Associate Professor, created an Inflation Reduction Act Funding Guide, an initiative above and beyond this contract but intended to support UGREEN members. Alignment with related organizations like these should be a source of guidance for the County and partners as UGREEN's value proposition is sharpened.



Members Henry Gage Jr. and Sally Warren of Build Green Now featured on the cover of Hudson Valley Magazine

Deliverables:

Year One progress toward the defined outputs over three years is summarized in this table:

TOTAL NUMBER OF	END OF YEAR 1	GOAL BY END OF YEAR 3
Businesses Reached Through Events	190, Complete	160
Businesses Reached Through Media	300, Plus print and radio audiences	1000
Follow Up Communications	Complete	30
Target Commitments (UCGBC)	5	8 High impact, 8 high visibility
Businesses Enrolled in UGREEN	113	500

"Congratulations to this year's Ulster Green Business Champions award winners for leading the way on private sector innovations that are a double-win for the planet and their businesses. I am incredibly proud of Ulster County's businesses for working to build a thriving green economy."

**- County Executive Jen Metzger,
Awards Celebration Opening Speaker**

REPORTING

An invoice and a report on UGREEN Program Coordination is submitted at the end of each month. UCEDA provided a clear structure for monthly reporting which was followed by the Firm, with reports uploaded monthly into Ulster County's Sharepoint for review. Additionally, other folders in the Sharepoint track and store detailed information including member lists, tracking of event attendance numbers and names, and PDFs of outreach materials that are print ready.

The invoice is a brief bulleted summary of the month's events, usually covering: new member numbers, the month's Webinar and/or Mixer, outreach activities, and meetings of note.

The report is a longer form that combines narrative reporting and numbers documentation.

The structure of the monthly report is as follows:

- Progress Report Narrative
- New Members Table, with contact person, email, title, business name
- New Contacts Table, with same
- Meetings, Events and Presentations
- Public Media Outreach
 - Social media numbers
- Networking Event / Mixer
 - Networking opportunities
 - Promote relevant job openings
 - Green careers training
 - Workforce development opportunities
- Problems / Resolutions
- Project Schedule Revisions
- Deliverables Reporting
 - Businesses reached through events
 - Businesses reached through media
 - Follow up communications
 - Commitments (referrals to UCGBC)
 - Total number of member businesses

A sample report is provided as Appendix 7, "Monthly Reporting Example."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Accomplishments and Outcomes

The Ulster Green Economy Network has come to life with 113 members, roughly 25% of whom have been active in the first year's live and virtual programming. Small scale but very real evidence of members' investment in the Network has been observed, including referrals of new members, cross-promotion of events, and member websites exhibiting the "Proud Member" widget. Newsletters and archived webinars have begun to provide the foundation for member learning. Services beyond this participatory program have been explored with initial members, giving rise to the recommendation for a structured member-to-member marketplace and member-to-member technical assistance forum in the next phase.

The Firm and Ulster County's team have learned, alongside members, about the funding and technical assistance resources available for participation in the fast evolution of state and federal climate solutions initiatives. This includes exploration of successful models adopted by more mature organizations in the green economy and social enterprise spaces, which can inform the development of UGREEN as it grows.

Discussion

Ulster County's leadership is well aware of the scale and urgency of the climate crisis, and its disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations. UGREEN will be an asset worth continuing investment, if - and only if - its work is aligned closely with County priorities for economic development and equity. This includes inclusive work force development, as reflected in the proposed Center for Work Force Innovation, and the strategic expansion of green job opportunities in marginalized communities.

For Ulster County, UGREEN's value proposition is not only the direct programming it provides to strengthen businesses, but the relationships and communication channels it supports between the county and its strategic industries across the spectrum that must grow to achieve climate goals. UGREEN's 113 founding year members can serve as the foundation for an employer network to define workforce development needs, a hub for the business-to-business marketplace, and as a robust support system for member businesses.

As discussed, while UGREEN has started with a linear growth pathway, shifting into more exponential growth by engaging members as outreach partners is realistic as long as member enthusiasm is high. This points to the value of capitalizing on the momentum of the Awards Celebration – for example potentially bringing members together for a midsummer gathering to receive updates on County green economy plans and provide their inputs.

For members, the network is a connector and source of professional support. This value can best be captured if the program is expanded to include customized activities that engage the members more fully as partners. These could include:

- Site visits hosted by members, showcasing best practices that can be adopted by other members
- A member-to-member marketplace, potentially structured as an online resource combined with 2 - 3 times/ year in-person “expo style” events
- A member-to-member technical assistance forum, which could be structured as thematic informal webinars (“ask the energy guru”); in-person workshops and/or a member listserv [which might be more readily utilized than the LinkedIn group if it were demonstrated as a vehicle for specific and easy member assistance]
- Members-only forums with the County Executive and Green Economy team to discuss and help shape new initiatives, especially with regard to workforce development and innovation
- Expanded newsletter to include analysis of county and state policies, funding opportunities, etc

As membership grows and industry/interest groups emerge, UGREEN members will be in a position to shape programming for both business and workforce development. Organizational models with elements that could be adapted to the County’s goals include:

- JobsFirstNYC, an NGO with a mission of investing in youth and connecting them to jobs through programming in partnership with employer networks. Key features of JobsFirstNYC are a robust pipeline for engaging young people with deep reach into communities, centralized analytic capabilities to inform program development, and thematic employer networks including one for the Green Economy.
- Blacc Vanilla Community Foundation, a Newburgh-based program that has nurtured 17 at-risk youth into the IBEW’s solar and electrical apprenticeship programs. BVCF is modeled on Homeboy Industries, Los Angeles’ largest gang diversion program, which provides holistic training, mentoring and work experience for individuals and their loved ones to create a support system for life success.
- The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, an NGO that was founded as a state agency with initial funding from the Legislature (a specific aspect that might be useful for Ulster County). VSJF excels at nurturing clusters of locally owned businesses within a sector to define and efficiently pursue common interests through programs that address workforce development, supply chain, supportive policies and more.

Each of these organizations has built programs systemically, in consultation with initial members. Each has important elements to contribute to Ulster County's emerging green economy strategy and especially its Center for Workforce Innovation. Some of the active UGREEN members are likely to be interested in exploring these programs directly - potentially through field trips, where feasible, as well as webinars.

To fulfill its initial vision, UGREEN must be an activated, dynamically growing network of businesses that are not just offered services but have the opportunity to serve. This, in turn, requires close coordination with Ulster County's economic development activities. As the first year of UGREEN and the Green Business Champions Program are evaluated internally, a possibility to be considered is that UGREEN would be better managed by staff rather than an external contractor. This would make day-to-day coordination easier, and allow course-correction to be made with both programs in mind. While the Firm has very much appreciated the opportunity to be part of this formative period, the best interests of Ulster County's climate and green economy initiatives may be best served by a more integrated effort that is managed within County government. At least, this option should be considered.

Conclusion

One year ago, UGREEN was a vision that had been thoughtfully developed by County leadership. Today it is a living network of business leaders united by a commitment to concerted climate action and building the green economy. Strategic growth and engagement of this network can contribute significantly to the achievement of Ulster County's bold climate and economic goals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ulster County Office of Economic Development
Department of the Environment
Ulster County Economic Development Alliance

"The trends are converging to create this opportunity to create, essentially, a green Chamber of Commerce."

- Perry Goldschein, Equitable Advisors, Awards Celebration Sponsor and Speaker



Contact

Sustainable Hudson Valley

PO Box 145

Rhinebeck, NY 12572

<https://sustainhv.org/>

APPENDICES

Appendices:

All Appendix documents uploaded to the Sharepoint as PDF's with titles matching this list, i.e. "1A. Kingston Wire Article"

1. In the News
 - a. Kingston Wire Article
 - b. Clean Power Guide Mention
2. Green Economy Summit
 - a. Program
 - b. Flyer
 - c. Panelist Bios
3. Focus Groups
 - a. Focus Group 1
 - b. Focus Group 2
4. Sustaine Reports
 - a. Stone Dock Pt 1
 - b. Stone Dock Pt 2
5. Awards Celebration
 - a. Program
 - b. Flyer
 - c. Instagram Flyer
 - d. Awards Testimonials
6. Promotional, Mixer, and Webinar Content
 - a. Mailing List Event Sign in Form
 - b. Sample Monthly Newsletter
 - c. Example Webinar Flyer
 - d. Example Mixer Flyer
 - e. QR Canvassing Postcard
7. Monthly Reporting Example
8. Outreach Campaign Lists (*Businesses Reached*)
9. Inventory
 - a. Inventory Report, "Understanding Ulster County's Green Economy"
 - b. Inventory Report, Expanded List of Farms

UGREEN Membership List by Sector

Clean Energy

Hutton Home Solutions
INF Associates LLC
Mid-Hudson Energy Transition Inc.
Mister Solar Guy / Plug PV
New Yorker for Clean Power
NY State Solar Farm
The Center for Post Carbon Logistics
RYCOR Heating & Cooling

Energy Efficiency

AHC
Alfandre Architecture/ Ecobuilders
Edward Isler Architect, PLLC
Energy Conservation Services
Green Building Specialists
Lightstar Renewables
Magnusson Architecture and Planning
Net-Zero Development LLC
Peace Painters
Rowan Woodwork
Simply Sustainable
The Builder Project
Wright Architects/ Wright Management Group
Cool Down

Waste Reduction Technologies and Recycling Services

Community Compost Company
Greenway Environmental Services

Clean Manufacturing

Fehr Bros Industries Inc

Landscape Design and Management Services

Hudson Valley Trail Works
KaN Landscape Design
Bloom Fine Gardening, Inc.

Financing and Investment

E/W Capital NY, LLC
Equitable
Ulster Saving Bank
LIFT Economy
Hudson Valley Venture Hub at SUNY New Paltz

Design, Planning, Consulting and Support Services

Hone Strategic LLC Planning & Preservation
Operation QOL
POLN8R Consulting
Reputation Dynamics
Simply Leap LLC

Agriculture

Four Winds Farm
Hudson Valley Vertical Farms, Inc.
Kingston YMCA Farm Project
Prospect Hill Orchards
Stone Ridge Orchard
Tongore Brook Farm LLC
Veritas Farms
White Feather Farm / NY Carbon

Cannabis Industry

Hemp & Humanity
Honey's Cannabis CBD & Accessories
NY Small Farma

Craft Beverage Production

Stoutridge Vineyard, LLC
Whitecliff Vineyard
Keegan Ales, LLC
Kingston Standard Brewing Co.

Artisanal Food Products, Catering, and Food Distribution

BjornQorn Sun-Popped Corn
Black Cat Bulk Goods
Common Table
Harana Market
Lagusta's Luscious
Nicci's Kltchen
Organic Nectars, Inc.
Phoenicia Farmers Market
Softer Power Sweets
Woodland Pantry
Hudson Valley EATS

Retail

Second Nature Refillery
Valentina Custom Frame & Gallery
Whiskey Kiss Brands, LLC
Accord Market

Service Providers

Bertison-George, LLC
Cadmus Group (Environmental Consulting)
CoWork Kingston
Dillon & Semenovitch Inc.
EscapeMaker.com
Hudson Valley Peak Performance
J. Patrick & Associates, Inc.
Law Offices of Dana Hall
Mane 101
Master of One Coaching
Nostrand Productions LLC
Read Reports Medical Review Services
Rebelbase
Rue Work, Inc.
Ryan & Ryan Insurance Brokers, Inc.
Silver Hollow Audio
Sun Creek Center
Digital Urban Farms
Climate Awareness Project
Family Of Woodstock, Inc.

Housing Organizations and Land Trusts

Kingston Land Trust
Latitude Regenerative Real Estate
RUPCO
Wallkill Valley Land Trust
Peace Nation Inc.

Education Centers

Wild Earth
Hudson River Maritime Museum

Hospitality & Entertainment

81 NORTH, LLC
Bearsville Theater LLC
Buttermilk Falls Inn & Spa
Stone Dock Golf Course & Cafe

Other

New York Heartwoods
Cross Point Fellowship
Gardiner Library
Highland Public Library
HUDSY
Spatial Issues
Stick to Local Studio
The Laughmakers
Upriver Studios
Woodstock Town Car
Ellenville Regional Hospital
Trust Up L3P



**Sustainable
Hudson Valley**