What Happened in 2020?

In the Small Business and Entrepreneurial ecosystem:

We all experienced the economic uncertainty, fear, and challenge of the Covid-19 outbreak in our ecosystem. This pandemic has been uniquely difficult for each individual, whether we were dealing with fears for our loved ones’ safety, housing insecurity, job loss, or huge shifts in how we do business. Achieving our mission requires honoring the holistic nature of work and business ownership. In this way, our 2020 impact report would be incomplete without acknowledging the personal toll that the pandemic has taken on all of us. Everyone in our organization, alongside everyone reading this report, has had to adapt to a vastly different world. We see you. We could not have done this without our community, not as individuals and not as an organization. For your support, and for the support you have entrusted us to offer, we are truly grateful.

In the Alliance for Community Development:

2020 did not start as a typical year for the Alliance. We began the year in search of a new Executive Director, and, in the interim, our staff at the time of three (one full-time and two part-time) worked closely with our Board of Directors to ensure that the organization could continue to do its work. In April 2020, the Alliance announced its 5th Executive Director in its over twenty year history: Naima McQueen, our former Director of Strategic Partnerships. Already a month into the first shelter-in-place lockdown, there was little time to step back and celebrate this exciting moment for our team. Instead, we dove straight into what would be a full year of pivots, growth, and ultimately deeper connection with our community.
What happened next?

This report will detail some of the triumphs achieved and challenges faced by the Alliance in 2020. It is vital to understand that our work is centered in equity, and as such we believe it is essential to meet our community members where they are at. **This means that no two entrepreneurs get exactly the same experience, because no two entrepreneurs or businesses are exactly the same.** How do we quantify the impact of highly connective and individual work? We’ve done our best, intermixing qualitative data with the most accurate and robust quantitative measurements we’ve been able to compile. Quantitative data can be challenging to collect even in the most stable times -- it requires our clients to set aside time that could otherwise be spent growing their businesses, requires a trusting relationship between our organization and the business owners who we are asking to provide us with sensitive information, and requires our staff to spend many hours at every stage of the data collection process. It is an important accountability practice to monitor our clients’ outcomes. We will continue to develop our data practices as we continue to grow and build multi-year relationships with our entrepreneurs.
In brief, here’s what we did in 2020 that you can expect to learn more about in this report:

We pivoted our Navigation Program model to be more agile and responsive, getting Covid-specific resources to entrepreneurs faster while working with many more clients than previous years.

We made the tough decision to hold off on launching our Capital Navigation Program, instead dedicating staff time to providing free technical assistance to entrepreneurs and organizations applying to the Paycheck Protection Program, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the CA Relief Grant and other time-sensitive small business funding opportunities.

We held our 12th annual conference virtually for the first time ever, with over 40 speakers and nearly 200 attendees.

We took over production and design of the annual Good Money Guide publication, which hadn’t been updated since 2018.

We deepened our commitment to the financial access and success of small local peer organizations and became a fiscal sponsor for impressive projects such as Oakstop Alliance and the Oakland Black Business Fund.

We piloted multiple new in-depth partnerships with other community organizations to increase accessibility to business services and resources.
We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to our mission of increasing access to capital and support for local, underrepresented entrepreneurs in the Bay Area. Despite years of collective equity work in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, there are still major gaps in access to capital and resources for entrepreneurs who are low-income, people of color, women, veterans, and/or entrepreneurs with disabilities.

We know that no single person or organization holds the ultimate solution to an inequitable system. Creating a just, dignified economy is a mammoth task, a mission that so many of us in the Bay Area work toward every day. This is why we take an “ecosystem” approach to addressing the barriers our entrepreneurs face. An ecosystem model requires collaboration through partnership rather than replication of existing services. That means showing up and staying engaged with all of the stakeholders involved; namely Entrepreneur Stakeholders, Business Support Stakeholders, Financial Support Stakeholders, and Community Stakeholders.

We work with all entrepreneurs at any stage or industry; however, many of our entrepreneurs are in the early or growth stages of business with annual revenues under $100,000 and are often in the Arts/Creative, Education, Food, and Retail industries.
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Navigation Program

The Problem

While there are many financial, educational, and professional resources available for Bay Area entrepreneurs, the sheer amount and specificity of these resources can make navigating them time consuming at best and render them ineffective at worst. Additionally, not all entrepreneurs have equitable access to the people and information that can lead to funding. The time burden of networking and researching is often a barrier for entrepreneurs, whether they’re at the ideation stage (while often also working one or several jobs) or are putting in the hours and sweat required to run their business full-time.

The Solution

Our Navigation program was created to provide entrepreneurs with individualized, one-on-one support to help them clarify their goals, their challenges, and their next steps. Each entrepreneur receives an individual session, a ‘resource roadmap’ of ecosystem partners best fit for their journey based on their goals, and a set of warm introductions to other organizations, individuals, or funders. The Alliance also follows up with each entrepreneur to track their progress and provide continuous support. The Alliance is not a one-stop-shop that will provide an entrepreneur with every service they may need; rather, we are a concierge service connecting entrepreneurs to the people, organizations, and information that they need.
As a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Alliance reworked our traditional Navigation program to create Covid Navigation. While the fundamental structure of the program is the same, Covid Navigation is different in a few key ways:

- **Faster**: Resource roadmaps in this program are provided on an expedited timeline.
- **More flexible**: Resources recommended in this program include business and funding recommendations, but also encompass personal needs as well. This can include housing, food, child care, and transportation.
- **Higher touch**: The Navigation team follows up with entrepreneurs in this program as often as needed, and sends relevant funding information to participants on a rolling basis.

### CLIENT PROFILE

**Delane's Natural Nail Care**

[delanesnails.com](http://delanesnails.com)

“Alliance has helped me in my time of need! Because of Alliance, I was able to secure a loan with ICA to keep my employees working and to be able to acquire new equipment when a drastic change took place in my industry that allowed me to keep the doors open to my business. I can’t thank Alliance enough!”

—Delane Sims
When the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was announced, the Alliance had an opportunity to partner with Self-Help Federal Credit Union and Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative to offer direct application assistance to PPP applicants. We have since provided TA for each round of PPP funding. In December, we began a partnership with the California Association for Micro Enterprise Opportunity and Lendistry to offer TA for organizations applying to the California Covid-19 Relief Grant through mid-2021.

Time is the most valuable resource that any business owner has, and technical assistance is a proven method of expediting the application process. We will continue teaming up with funding organizations to assist as many people as possible in applying for funds like PPP and the CA Relief Grant. For massive relief programs such as these it is vital to ensure that all businesses, not just those with internal accounting teams and business consultants on retainer, are able to receive emergency funding.
“When COVID hit, every event on our calendar was canceled and it was devastating. Now, we are pivoting our business focus on better serving our community and helping fight food disparities in East Oakland. The Alliance Navigation team was so helpful by connecting us with a mentor entrepreneur. She ended up being a “small biz fairy godmother” to us and helped us get on the right track with our new business model.

We’re excited to help our community, and to see what the future holds!”

~Jazmin Vilata and Enrique Soriano

“Covid has hit the design & construction industry really hard like so many others. My career has been spent in the architectural lighting industry working in fixture design and more recently educating architects in LED Lighting technology. .... Alliance for Community Development introduced me to Pacific Community Ventures where I started working with a business coach who has helped be through the process pivoting my business to respond to the changing experience of the economic climate. ...

... The Alliance helped me through some of the bumpy areas of recertification. I feel supported as a woman business owner by both the Alliance for Community Development and Pacific Community Ventures and open all their emails to get the amazing nuggets.....”

~Therese Laherie
Programs Summary

We provided direct, one-on-one service to 107 businesses in 2020

Client demographics

Top industries (in order)
- Food
- Education
- Retail/Apparel
- Health & Wellness/Beauty & Wellness
- Professional Services
- Art/Creative

Number of Businesses Served
- 16 General Navigation
- 44 COVID Navigation
- 47 Technical Assistance Include PPP, PUA
- 107 Total

Capital Obtained from Technical Assistance
$492,270.00
Ecosystems Event Offerings

In a typical year, the Alliance offers a variety of workshops and quarterly ecosystem in-person gatherings. The fundamentally atypical year of 2020 forced us to pivot from this model in a few ways:

- **Value-first events**: Based on feedback from our entrepreneurs, we chose only to offer events that we felt met criteria of actionability, immediate value, and relevance.

- **Community check-ins**: Rather than the typical networking convenings we usually provide for our ecosystem, we offered community check-ins in partnership with other organizations. These were primarily aimed at fighting the isolation, fear, and loneliness that everyone was feeling, rather than serving a specific professional goal.

- **‘Zoom fatigue’**: We chose not to pursue a specific goal number of events in 2020, recognizing that virtual gatherings are uniquely exhausting. We held as many as we could justify based on their content and purpose, and no more.

We had **309 total event attendees** in 2020, of which **27% were repeat attendees**.

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**Event attendees (2020)**

- 71.50% Business Support Provider
- 20% Entrepreneur
- 8.50% Financial Stakeholder
On Friday, October 2nd, we held our twelfth annual Bay Area Capital Connections conference (BACC XII). Our annual conference convenes entrepreneurs, business and financial support providers, thought leaders, and community members to discuss actionable solutions to the most urgent problems standing in the way of a just, holistic economy. Our theme for BACC XII was *Striving Toward a Dignified Economy*, and examined questions such as:

- What does a dignified economy look like?
- How can we co-create it?
- How do we move through the healing process toward building a radically resilient economic future for our communities, one that is sustainable and flexible enough to adapt to the ills of a pandemic and rise above years of systemic oppression?

**Stakeholder Group Representation (90% of registrants)**

- Entrepreneurs: 29%
- Partners: 21%
- Financial Support Providers: 16%
- Business Support Providers: 13%
- Community Members: 11%

**180 Attendees**

**9.7/10 Average Attendee Rating**
BACC XII ATTENDEE PROFILE

Get tha Fork Outta Here
BBQ Restaurant

“I don’t want to be at the table by myself”

–Dorenda Haynes, Owner

Dorenda was a speaker in The Art of Pivoting afternoon roundtable where she shared her heartfelt entrepreneurial journey and her desire to bring others in her community along with her in building her business. She inspired many with her perseverance.
In 2020, the Alliance was honored to take over publication of the Good Money Guide. The Guide was started as a collaboration between The Sustainable Business Alliance and The East Bay Express. The guide features a list of local community funders, helps to distinguish among different kinds of funding, offers expert tips, and features some local small businesses. The community funders on this list meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Locally-based and committed to local reinvestment
- Adheres to a social or environmental mission
- Enables regular people to invest in their community
- Avoids investing in harmful or extractive products & activities
- Avoids unfair or misleading practices and pricing
Our Team

Staff

Naima McQueen, MBA
Executive Director

Melanie Nuni, MPA
Director of Programs

Julia McCotter, MBA
Communications Manager

Katherine Stubbs
Program Coordinator

Alexandra Pineda
Program Coordinator

Board of Directors

Michael Gunning
Chairperson of the Board of Directors

James Nixon
Treasurer of the Board of Directors

Dennis Wong, Esq
Secretary of the Board of Directors

Lyz Ferguson, MBA
Member of the Board of Directors
Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all of our partners, community members, clients, and everyone reading this report for your interest in and support of the Alliance. As we look forward to another high-growth year, we are reminded of the work and dedication that it takes to re-imagine our economic system. We believe in a Bay Area where all communities are able to thrive by their own definitions. Let’s continue working together until this vision is a lived reality!