



PLANT CHICAGO CIRCULAR ECONOMY LEADERS NETWORK 2023

WHAT

A support network for small businesses interested in working and learning together to co-create and cultivate **local circular economies*** in Chicago. The network will include two tiers, detailed below.

Tier One

- Five structured networking meetings hosted in-person at Plant Chicago.
 - Structured networking events will take place on March 21, May 9, July 11, September 12, and November 7, each from 1-3pm.
 - Meetings will be ~2 hours each. Each meeting will include the introduction of a circular economy-related topic (guided by our [toolkit for small businesses](#)) and time to network with other like-minded business owners in Chicago.
- Annual membership fee is \$100.

Tier Two (Exclusive to Back of the Yards-based businesses; application for Tier Two is not currently open to the public.)

- In addition to the five structured networking meetings, Tier Two will include research and technical assistance from Plant Chicago staff in support of one [circular economy goal](#).
- Annual membership fee is \$300.

WHO

Businesses from any industry can apply; potential members include established small businesses, early-stage entrepreneurs, home-based businesses, and independent contractors. We consider small businesses to have 20 or fewer employees; however, we are open to larger numbers as well.

Businesses must be located in Chicago and priority will be given to businesses located on the city's south side.

WHY

Plant Chicago believes in the power of local circular economies to bring economic success to small businesses while also ensuring that business activities benefit the natural environment and surrounding communities. We also believe that a local circular economy must be a collaborative practice; no business can cultivate a local circular economy alone.



WHEN

- January - February: informational interviews with interested businesses to understand needs, determine membership status, and plan programming.
- March 21 from 1-3pm: Kickoff at Plant Chicago!
- The four remaining events will take place on May 9, July 11, September 12, and November 7, each from 1-3pm.

HOW

If you're interested in joining the network, please [submit your application](#) by February 1, 2023.

If you have any additional questions about the program, please email Elise O'Malley, Plant Chicago's Circular Economy & Small Business Manager, at elise@plantchicago.org.

***What is a local circular economy?**

A local circular economy is a collaborative practice sustained by the local circulation of materials, nutrients, knowledge, and economic value. Values of equity, transparency, diversity, and inclusion define its success.

In a local circular economy, business activities should protect natural ecosystems, address the needs and aspirations of local community stakeholders, and increase human knowledge and capacity to sustain this new economy into the future.