



## PLANT CHICAGO CIRCULAR ECONOMY LEADERS NETWORK 2022

### WHAT

A support network for small businesses interested in working with and learning together to co-create and cultivate a **local circular economy\*** in Chicago. Business owners will choose to work on a specific circular economy goal for a period of 8 months, from March to November, with support from each other and the larger Plant Chicago network.

Membership in the network will include:

- Free monthly workshops on “Business 101” and circular economy-specific topics
- Free waste audit conducted either on-site at your business or at Plant Chicago
- Guided peer-to-peer knowledge sharing activities
- Accountability support from Plant Chicago staff in the form of quarterly check-ins
- Technical support from Plant Chicago staff and interns on relevant circular economy-specific projects
- Mentorship opportunities
- Revenue-generating opportunities through partner workshops, pop-up events, and Plant Chicago’s on-site retail space
- Access to shared spaces for R&D, teaching, and administration

### **\*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 regenerate 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.*

### WHO

We are currently recruiting small businesses to join us for the Circular Economy Leaders Network 2022 cohort. 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.



We are seeking folks who can commit to working on their selected circular economy goals and who can attend scheduled programming (monthly workshops and quarterly calls). 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.

Lastly, we know that owners and employees of small businesses have a lot on their plates. This network will allow us to supplement current efforts with knowledge, resources, and Plant Chicago staff time to ensure that the implementation of circular economy practices adds to business operations instead of becoming a burden.

### **WHEN**

- December 2021 - February 2022: informational interviews with interested businesses to understand needs and plan programming
- March 2022: membership events and full roster of support services will begin

### **HOW**

If you're interested in joining the network, please email Elise O'Malley, Plant Chicago's Circular Economy & Small Business Manager, at [elise@plantchicago.org](mailto:elise@plantchicago.org) to set up an informational interview.

### **MEMBERSHIP FEE**

The membership fee to join the network is \$50.