2026 GBNN Summit Agenda

Summit Day 1 – Thursday, December 3 – 8am – 4:30pm PT

8:00–8:30 AM – Registration and Light Breakfast

8:30–8:45 AM – Welcome to Day 1 – GBNN welcome, overview of the schedule, and housekeeping.

8:45 – 10:00 AM - Building Corporate Partnerships to Power Small Business Sustainability

Corporations and small businesses share common goals, such as lower costs, stronger communities, and credible sustainability progress. In this moderated panel, representatives from Intuit, IKEA, and Sony Pictures Entertainment will discuss how large companies partner with small businesses, why they have chosen to partner locally, and the challenges partnerships can help overcome. A structured conversation is followed by audience Q&A, leaving attendees with ideas for approaching corporate sustainability teams in their own communities to build local impact.

Moderator: Lacey Raak, California Green Business Network (CAGBN); Speakers: Sarah Hilmer, Community Impact and Strategic Alliances at Intuit; Stephanie Morales, Manager, Global Responsible Sourcing at Sony Pictures Entertainment; Vanessa Pasillas, Marketing Leader, IKEA Costa Mesa.

10:00 – 10:30 AM – Break

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM – Using Tools to Manage Programs and Impact: Green Business Tracker

Whether your program already uses GreenBizTracker or is exploring other program management tools, this session shows how tools help green business programs manage their work and track impact. Presenters share a new video overview of Green Business Tracker (GBT), walk through updates to its measures and metrics, and report findings from an internal audit, with open Q&A for current users and newcomers alike.

Presenters: Jo Fleming and Courtney Faulkner, Environmental Innovations / CAGBN

11:30 – 12:45 PM – Lunch and Keynote Fireside Chat with County of San Diego

Join Eden Bruckman, Chief Sustainability Officer for the County of San Diego's Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice, for a conversation about how her office connects businesses to county sustainability goals. She'll share how the County builds inclusive programs that link businesses to the tools, resources and support they need to adopt sustainable practices. The conversation covers policies that elevate certified green businesses in local governments, the County's partnership with the San Diego Regional Energy Network that connects businesses with their regional decarbonization strategy, and how growing small businesses can build a greener workforce. Attendees will leave with ideas for strengthening their own partnerships with local government and elevating small businesses in your community.

Speaker: Eden Bruckman, Chief Sustainability Officer, County of San Diego Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice
Moderator: Cassie Carroll, Director, GBNN

12:45 – 1:55 PM – Safer Chemicals, Stronger Businesses: Helping Small Businesses Move Away from Toxic Chemicals

Small manufacturers, auto body shops and dry cleaners often rely on hazardous chemicals, but switching to safer ones can feel out of reach without technical help. The Toxics Use Reduction Institute (TURI) at UMass Lowell shares practical strategies for helping small businesses make that transition, with case studies from small companies in a range of sectors. Presenters introduce easy-to-use tools that green business programs can use to identify safer alternatives and explain how TURI helps businesses overcome technical and resource barriers while improving their competitiveness. The session closes with ways green business programs can partner with TURI to bring technical expertise, training and safer alternatives assessments to the businesses they serve. Attendees will leave with tools and partnership ideas for supporting safer chemical use in their own communities.

Presenter: Colin Hannahan, Policy Analyst, Toxics Use Reduction Institute, UMass Lowell

1:55 – 2:25 PM - Break

2:30–4:30 PM – Brewery Technical Training and Tour – A behind-the-scenes technical tour of a brewery in San Diego, CA. Travel from the hotel runs 2:30–3:00 PM, followed by a 60 to 90-minute training and tour.

4:30–6:30 PM – Networking Event (Location to be announced)

Summit Day 2 – Friday, December 4 – 8am – 5pm PT

8:00 - 8:30 AM – Coffee and Light Breakfast

8:30 - 8:45 AM – Welcome to Day 2 – GBNN welcome, overview of schedule, and housekeeping

8:45 – 9:45 AM - Closing the Loop: Coaching and Data-Driven Waste Diversion for Small Businesses

Reducing waste is one of the easiest ways for a small business to cut costs, but many don't know where to start or how to track impact. This session shares lessons from the Circular Business Academy, which pairs hands-on coaching with the Rego waste analytics tool to help businesses start implementing circular waste management practices. It covers the approach, the cost savings participating businesses have measured, and how green business programs can use this model in their own communities. Attendees will leave with practical ideas for helping businesses divert waste and make the case for circular practices.

Presenter: Aidan Lawton, Cities of Englewood, Littleton, and Sheridan, CO

9:45 – 10:00 AM – Break

10:00 AM – 11:45 PM – Meeting Businesses Where They Are: Equity-Centered Outreach That Works

Reaching small businesses that green business programs have historically missed takes more than a flyer or email. This session pairs program strategy with hands-on practice. First, learn how prebate/rebate programs and partnerships with community-based organizations help programs connect with Spanish-speaking owners and Environmental Justice communities. Then join "Talking Sustainability to a Business Owner," a short presentation on ROI-first outreach followed by an interactive round table role-play, where participants try out the roles of business owner, sustainability coordinator, and evaluator and give each other feedback. Attendees will leave with outreach strategies and conversation techniques they can use in their own communities.

Presenters: Jane Tovar, San Francisco Environment Department; Berenice El Gharamti and José Luis Ramos, Monarca Group

11:45 – 12:45 PM – Lunch

12:45 – 1:45 PM – Serving Up Safer Meals: Engaging Businesses in Using PFAS-Free Food Packaging

Restaurants and food businesses are a natural fit for green business programs but moving them toward PFAS-free foodware takes planning, outreach, and recognition. This session presents four food-business case studies that show how programs engaged owners, marketed the effort, supported implementation, and recognized participants, along with results from the Safer Foodware Initiative and tips for building a similar program on a limited budget. Attendees will leave with practical ideas for recruiting food businesses and launching a PFAS-free foodware effort in their own communities.

Presenters: J Allen Heise, Michigan Sustainable Business Forum; Zoharia Drizin, Illinois Green Business Association (IGBA)

1:45 – 2:00 PM – Break

2:00 – 3:00 PM – Stronger Together: Collaborating Across Regions to Build Program Capacity

No single program has every skill or resource it needs, but partners in other regions can strengthen support and resources. As one of ten regional U.S. EPA-designated Environmental Finance Centers, the New England Environmental Finance Center (NEEFC) supports projects across all six New England states, and it has made sharing resources and collaborating with fellow EFCs a priority. This session walks through how NEEFC recognizes opportunities for collaboration and develops projects in a collaborative, supportive way, including co-applying for funding and building aligned projects such as BetterBev. Attendees will leave with ideas for finding partners and pooling capacity to take on bigger projects in their own regions.

Presenter: Luke Truman, New England Environmental Finance Center

3:00 - 4:45 PM – GBNN Strategic Session

4:45–5:00 PM – Closing and Thank You