

Finalists Announced for 2023 BOOST Awards for Midwestern Sustainable Entrepreneurs

BOOST Awards on Oct 24 will invest \$25,000 in four finalists solving regional environmental and economic issues in honor of Delta Institute's 25th Anniversary

CHICAGO, IL, USA, September 14, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, four sustainability-focused



BOOST directly invests in those who are passionate about sustainability—and just need that extra ‘boost’ to take their innovative start-up to the next level of impact.”

Bill Schleizer, CEO, Delta Institute

start-ups were announced as Finalists for the 2023 BOOST award, hosted by Midwest-focused nonprofit Delta Institute and their Delta Emerging Leaders associate board. Since 2012, Delta Institute has hosted BOOST to "Build Opportunities for Original and Sustainable Thinking." This annual event serves as platform to celebrate and build a community to support unique start-ups that promote sustainability, climate action, and environmental justice. Over the past 11 years, BOOST has awarded nearly \$100,000 to support 20 entrepreneurs.

To celebrate Delta Institute's 25th Anniversary in 2023,

previous BOOST winners were invited to reapply for larger grant awards. Traditionally, BOOST has awarded grants of \$3,000 - \$5,000 to each year's winners. To further support these entrepreneurs, Delta Institute is doubling the winning award to \$10,000, and providing \$5,000 to each of the other finalists. Collectively, Delta Institute will award a record \$25,000 in funding in commemoration of its 25th anniversary. Guests not only listen to the pitches from this year's finalists but also determine this year's grand prize winner by voting for their favorite pitch during the event.

All prior BOOST winners were invited to reapply, with a very competitive candidate pool for this year's awards. Please view previous winners on our website to learn about the many amazing sustainability organizations operating in the Midwest.

The four Finalists span multiple issue areas ranging from youth development to sustainable sourcing to regenerative agriculture to biodegradable hair products designed for Black women. This year's BOOST Finalists include:

Gardeneers, 2014 BOOST winner, works with Chicago's South- and Westside schools to contribute positively to the food system by supporting students in garden programs to build

their knowledge, skills, and habits to become leaders who care for themselves, their environment, and their communities. They partner with schools in under-resourced communities to customize each program to grow and maintain vibrant, learning gardens that promote healthy eating, a love of nature, and a connection to community.

<https://gardeneers.org/>

Southside Blooms, 2017 BOOST winner, a brand operating under the umbrella company of Chicago Eco House, received national recognition on The Ellen DeGeneres Show and received a \$10,000 award for their work. Quilen Blackwell, the BOOST winner and company founder, was quoted saying, that the money will allow the organization to hire young people in need of a job or community service project and “get them off the streets and into the flower industry.”

<https://www.southsideblooms.com/>

Lillian Augusta Hair, 2019 BOOST winner, a start-up devoted to creating plant-based braiding hair as a sustainable alternative to synthetic braiding for Black women and by Black women. The company’s products will be plastic-free, irritation-free, and carcinogen-free. Along with being a previous BOOST winner, Lillian Augusta was also a semi-finalist for the TechRise Chicago 100K Pitch Competition powered by P33, and has been featured in many regional- and national- media outlets for their innovative products. <https://www.hairwithoutharm.com/>

Zumwalt Acres, 2020 BOOST winner, is a youth-led Jewish farm and research center that works to transform Midwestern agriculture by sequestering carbon, revitalizing soil, and producing nutritious food while supporting young adults as they advocate for equity and resiliency in food and agriculture. Annually, they host over 50 apprentices and more than 150 visitors/participants at the farm. <https://www.zumwaltacres.org/>

“It’s thrilling to see the amazing work being done by these Finalists, and all 20 prior BOOST winners,” said William (Bill) Schleizer, CEO of Delta Institute. “With so many issue areas across our home region being explored and addressed by these amazing organizations, I hope that our friends and neighbors take the time to learn more about how they’re creating a more sustainable, equitable, and innovative Midwest.”

Since its inception in 2012, BOOST has invested in Midwestern start-ups ranging from local composting businesses, an accessible repair-and-share tool library, a zero-waste grocer, and many more innovative approaches to reduce the region’s carbon footprint while addressing key environmental issues. Last year’s event is available as [video on demand](#).

[BOOST will be held as a hybrid event on Tuesday, October 24, 2023](#), from 6:00-9:00pm CST with both in-person and virtual attendance options. BOOST will be held at the Kaplan Institute at Illinois Tech, 3137 S Federal St, Chicago, IL 60616, with a live-stream and virtual engagement opportunities for regional/national attendees to watch from the comfort of their home. In-person tickets cost \$75 and virtual tickets cost \$25 per guest. Ticket sales will support the BOOST awards and the mission of Delta Institute.

BOOST is supported by several generous sponsors this year, including American Family Insurance Institute for Corporate and Social Impact, United Airlines, and William Blair. The event is organized by the Delta Emerging Leaders, the associate board of Delta Institute, to award grants to early-stage entrepreneurs and start-ups with innovative ideas and approaches to helping address sustainability issues, climate change, and environmental justice.

“All of us are so honored to name this exceptional slate of finalists,” shares Grace Snider, the Chair of the Delta Emerging Leaders associate board organizing the event. “Seeing so many projects tackle the climate crisis, while centering equity and justice in their work, is what BOOST is all about, and this year’s event will be a great way to honor and celebrate these local sustainability leaders.”

Delta Institute collaborates with communities to solve complex environmental challenges throughout the Midwest. We address Midwestern environmental, economic, and climate challenges today, so that our home and region are more resilient, equitable, and innovative tomorrow. [Delta Institute is a 501\(c\)\(3\) nonprofit organization](#) with a 2023 Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar/Candid and a Four-Star "Give with Confidence" Rating from Charity Navigator.

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