

Four Chicago Start-ups Named BOOST Finalists to Scale Environmental Solutions

Elevating community-led solutions, Delta Institute's 13th annual BOOST supports innovative entrepreneurs with \$12,000 in small business grants

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, [the nonprofit Delta Institute](#) announced four finalists to participate in its annual "BOOST" program, which has served as a platform for early-stage entrepreneurs and community leaders to develop innovative solutions and products to promote environmental sustainability.



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Bill Schleizer, CEO, Delta Institute

A [2023 report](#) from the Kauffman Foundation noted that 35% of early-stage entrepreneurs ultimately abandon their hopes to start a business due to lack of financial resources. Beyond funding, many startups also struggle to develop the know-how of successfully establishing and operating a business.

BOOST – or “Building Opportunities for Original & Sustainable Thinking” – addresses these challenges by providing a platform for individuals to receive early-stage funding for eco-conscious startups, access a network of resources, and connect with a community of supporters. Delta Institute announced this year’s BOOST finalists

include:

- Chelsey Faulkner of Candid Hues Cosmetics, a high-end natural makeup brand, crafted for BIPOC women, using eco-friendly packaging that reduces waste via an in-house recycling and bottle refilling program as well as producing other products made with biodegradable materials. <https://candidhuescosmetics.com/>

- Jimmy Kern of the Network49 Environmental Justice Committee, a vine trellis project that will enhance skills and knowledge for residents of heat-susceptible neighborhoods to design, implement, and maintain greenspace. The group works with public school teachers in fostering cohorts of student-scientists and climate activists who promote community-driven projects.

<https://bit.ly/N49Vines>

- Gillian Jackson of Snail Catalog, a new print & fabrication studio that lends a helping hand to artists, small businesses, and nonprofits seeking environmentally-focused signage; the company is working toward offering 100% PVC-free products to limit the spread of microplastics and create a take-back/recycling program for release liners.

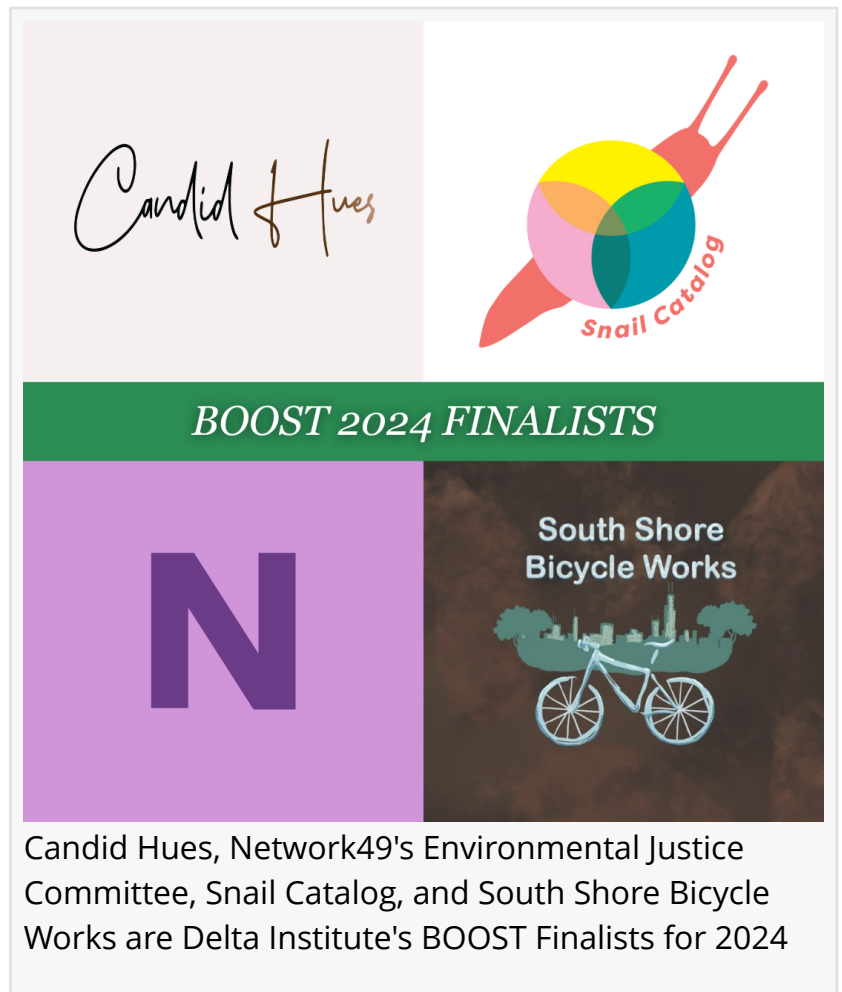
<https://www.snailcatalog.com/>

- Damian Lee of South Shore Bicycle Works, a worker cooperative providing Chicago's South Shore community with low-cost bicycles, repairs, and educational programming, ultimately working toward sustainable transportation equity for residents on the South Side of Chicago.

<https://dot.cards/southshorebicycleworks>

Since its inception, BOOST has invested over \$100,000 in small business grants to 20 entrepreneurs and community leaders with start-ups that center environmental sustainability. Past winners include groups like Block Bins, Chicago Tool Library, Eco.Logic, EcoShip, Gardeneers, Lillian Augusta Beauty, Southside Blooms, The Urban Canopy, and Zumwalt Acres. These start-ups address needs like increasing access to residential composting, developing plastic-free hair care products for women of color, redeveloping vacant lots into flower farms for local floral delivery, and much more.

“When BOOST funded us in 2017, we were in our earliest stages with a budget of \$57,545,” shares Quilen Blackwell, CEO and Founder of Southside Blooms and Chicago Eco House, which won Delta Institute’s BOOST competition in 2017. “Flower sales were at zero, and we had a strong vision for what the organization could become. This past year, we projected our sales to exceed half a million dollars and our overall organization’s total revenue is on pace to hit \$1.5



million.”

The flagship BOOST event is a unique experience that relies on audience members directly participating in the selection process. At the event, four finalists pitch their ideas for developing climate-conscious start-ups and community-centric organizations. At the end of the evening, the audience votes for their favorite pitches and awards small business grants, ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000, to all the finalists.

“Every year, it is a thrill to see a new group of emerging entrepreneurs and community leaders share their innovative and unique ideas for a more sustainable Chicago and greater Midwest,” shares Bill Schleizer, CEO of Delta Institute.

“It’s an honor for all of us at Delta Institute to be able to showcase these four finalists—each of whom is embracing their own passions and talents to make big impacts that matter deeply for each of their communities and industries.”

BOOST will be held on Thursday, October 17, 2024, from 6:00pm-9:00pm at Edelman, 111 N. Canal Street, Chicago, IL 60606. The program is supported by several sponsors, including the American Family Insurance Dreams Foundation, United Airlines, and William Blair. [Tickets are available](#) at <https://delta-institute.org/boost> for \$45 each and include the cost of food and drinks for guests. Proceeds from the event support Delta Institute’s environmental, economic, and climate goals as a nonprofit.

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 2024 Platinum Seal of Transparency from Candid and a Four-Star "Give with Confidence" Rating from Charity Navigator.

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