

Strengthening the Economic Resilience of the Garment District

INSIGHTS FROM YEAR 1 OF
THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
COLLABORATIVE



FALL
2021





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About the Garment District Alliance (GDA)

The Garment District Alliance (www.garmentdistrictnyc.com) is a not-for-profit corporation established in 1993 to improve the quality of life and economic vitality of Manhattan's Garment District. Through programs in the areas of streetscape improvements, sanitation and public safety, marketing and promotions, economic development, and community service, the Garment District Alliance partners with local building owners and businesses to enhance the vibrancy of this storied Midtown Manhattan neighborhood.



About Resilient Cities Catalyst (RCC)

Resilient Cities Catalyst (www.rcc.city) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, founded by members of the 100 Resilient Cities leadership team in 2019, to drive catalytic change to help partners solve their most pressing challenges. RCC works towards a vision where cities ensure that all residents, in particular, the most vulnerable, are safer, healthier and thriving in the face of everyday stresses and are able to withstand and recover quickly after shocks.

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Program Background

An iconic neighborhood and long-standing steward

For well over a century, New York City's Garment District has played a unique historic, cultural and economic role for the city. It is home to the greatest concentration of designers in the country and houses a tight-knit network of fashion-related businesses that combine design, technology and handcraft to support the city's cutting edge fashion industry. A large number of these are minority- and women-owned businesses, reflecting a richness and breadth of experience that builds on the neighborhood's past and uniquely positions it among Manhattan's commercial districts today.

Beyond fashion, the Garment District is home to a growing diversity of businesses - from restaurants and hotels to professional services - all contributing to the vibrancy of the district.

Since its founding in 1993 the Garment District Alliance (GDA) has served this storied Midtown Manhattan neighborhood. Working in partnership with local building owners and businesses, GDA offers an array of programs and services that improve the quality of life and economic vitality of the neighborhood.

24

blocks

6,500

businesses

149,000

employees*

1

big button



*2019



An investment in the Garment District's future

In late 2019 the Garment District Alliance (GDA) launched a new program aimed at catalyzing business development in the district, ensuring the neighborhood's workforce remains competitive, and fostering the ongoing dynamism of the district now and into the future. This multi-year, multi-million dollar programmatic investment offers a unique opportunity to bring together a cohort of innovative providers - selected annually through a competitive Request for Proposals process - that offer training, one-on-one consulting and advisory services to the district's ecosystem of businesses, entrepreneurs and workers.

In its inaugural year, GDA engaged four diverse New York City-based organizations to launch the suite of programming that would come to be known as the Business Development Collaborative.¹ A mix of artisan- and worker-focused collaboratives, university industry innovators, and expert manufacturing consulting organizations, the first cohort of program providers was selected in December 2019:

- **Custom Collaborative:** An entrepreneurship and workforce development organization that trains and supports women from low-income and immigrant communities to launch fashion careers and engages with businesses to understand their workforce needs
- **ITAC:** An expert manufacturing and technology advisement firm that connects New York City small and medium-sized firms to ideas, resources, and experts to help them improve how they work
- **Made in NYC:** An initiative of the Pratt Center for Community Development that supports local manufacturers and makers in New York City by providing skills-building programs, marketing services and promotional platforms, and small business assistance and resources for free to the Made in NYC community
- **Nest:** A global nonprofit organization dedicated to building a connected and visible handwork community by identifying overlooked or excluded skilled workers and providing resources and training needed to fully leverage handwork and craft production as part of local small business development efforts

To drive the program administration, design and delivery of the Business Development Collaborative and bring together these four organizations under a unified program, GDA partnered with **Resilient Cities Catalyst** (RCC), a global non-profit organization of urban practitioners and resilience experts that helps communities solve their most pressing challenges.

¹ Nine organizations were originally selected as program providers through the first competitive RFP process. Due to the compounding challenges of program delivery due to the impacts of COVID-19 and a change in Federal administration priorities, four organizations - Course of Trade, Fashion Institute of Technology, Kent State University and the Department of Commerce - decided to withdraw from the program. The fifth organization - CFDA - is currently working with GDA to scope out a service offering that aligns with their core competencies and the needs of the Garment District.



Unprecedented challenges and an opportunity to innovate

Just as GDA was preparing to launch the Business Development Collaborative in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit New York City. And almost immediately, the significance of the program's mandate - to strengthen the competitiveness of the neighborhood's workforce and industry - took on even greater import in the wake of COVID-19's impacts and its cascading economic devastation.

Within days of New York City's State of Emergency declaration, the Garment District, like all commercial districts across the five boroughs, was witness to a raft of temporary business closings to keep workers and owners safe and a dramatic drop in foot traffic in the neighborhood. As weeks went on, business closures continued, hotels in the district shuttered as the tourist industry collapsed, and pedestrian volumes dropped by 72% year over year by July 2020.²

Beyond these immediate impacts, the pandemic exacerbated many of the long-standing challenges facing the neighborhood, and the businesses, artisans and workers that the Business Development Collaborative was designed to support.

Like many manufacturing hubs across the nation, the Garment District had seen a steep decline in production and the closing of factories over the previous half century. Since 2000 alone, apparel manufacturing jobs declined by 74% in the district, with total manufacturing employment there falling to

just over 5,000 jobs total.³ Many businesses operating within the traditionally tight-knit ecosystem of the district had not previously needed to establish robust branding strategies or launch online sales operations to diversify their customer base and sustain their businesses. And owners consistently struggled to find the skilled workforce they needed or turned to freelance or contract workers for specialized work.⁴

“The program has been received with enthusiasm by all participants... From a Covid perspective, the program could not have come at a better time for many of these struggling businesses.”

—ITAC

GDA's inaugural Business Development Collaborative - with its diverse group of leading business and workforce development organizations spearheaded by an internationally recognized urban resilience nonprofit - was ideally positioned to address the compounding challenges impacting the neighborhood. With the district facing unprecedented threats, its network of businesses, entrepreneurs, and workers would need GDA's new programming more than ever.

² *Economic Quarterly Report: 1st Quarter 2021*, Garment District Alliance, Spring 2021. Retrieved August 23, 2021 from https://garmentdistrict.nyc/sites/default/files/admin-files/2021-05/EconomicReport_Spring21.pdf

³ *ibid*

⁴ *The Handwork Landscape: New York City Garment District*, Nest, December 2020. Retrieved August 23, 2021 from <https://www.buildanest.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Handwork-Landscape-NY-Garment-District.pdf>

Launch of the Business Development Collaborative



Launch of the Business Development Collaborative

In the wake of the immediate shock of the pandemic, RCC and the four expert program providers partnered closely with GDA to ensure that the organization’s catalytic investment would be leveraged to help the district ecosystem navigate the acute challenges of COVID-19 today and emerge on stronger footing for the future.

Rooted in the knowledge that greater, more transformational impact can be achieved through collective efforts across program partners, RCC worked to foster a cross-organizational approach to Business Development Collaborative programming that brought together the diverse expert providers as a cohort. To embed collaboration across individual program’s delivery, RCC developed a collective impact framework,

specifically highlighting efforts across scale - from individual artisan or business owner to company to district - and articulating shared goals. While each of the four providers offered district businesses, artisans and workers a unique set of services, together they delivered programming that collectively aimed to achieve the following for the district as a whole:



Gather insights

on workforce and business needs and challenges through a district-wide survey jointly developed and distributed by a subgroup of program providers



Strengthen the capacity

of business owners, entrepreneurs and workers through workshops, specialized consulting, and creative or technical services based on the needs uncovered in the survey and outreach efforts



Build community

among district businesses and connect peers in the industry through networking events and leadership forums



Elevate the Garment District

through marketing programs and events that uplift the district’s unique identity

The suite of resilient recovery and workforce training programs offered by the four Business Development Collaborative providers were grounded in each organization’s core competencies and areas of expertise - and designed to meet the immediate needs of district businesses and workers, while building a stronger operating foundation for a post-pandemic world.

GDA Business Development Collaborative Year 1 Programs and Services



Custom Collaborative provided workforce support services to district businesses, including advanced skills training to meet business needs, job placement from Custom Collaborative’s pool of skilled talent, and workshops addressing workplace equity and sustainability practices. Their program delivered:



ITAC’s Rapid Intervention Program provided Garment District manufacturers and businesses with expert advice in business strategy, operations, finance, digital marketing and human resources. Specifically, ITAC’s program consisted of four offerings:



Made in NYC provided a range of business technical assistance and training to strengthen the marketing capacity of fashion design, manufacturing and other Garment District companies. The programming comprised of three strategies:



Nest’s Makers United program aimed to build a connected and visible handwork community in the district. The program offered skills and business focused workshops, and provided partnership opportunities between craftspersons and designers, brands, and industry buyers to ensure that a new creative outlet for production is thriving. The program comprised of four components:


GATHER
INSIGHTS


STRENGTHEN
CAPACITY


BUILD
COMMUNITY


ELEVATE THE
DISTRICT

CUSTOM COLLABORATIVE

A district survey to assess workforce and technology needs, and to identify which district businesses could benefit most from their services



Manufacturer discounts to district businesses to take advantage of Custom Collaborative's Worker Owned Cooperative, which provides light manufacturing services and a highly skilled workforce



Business events and trainings, such as a virtual job placement convening and a leadership forum on equity and inclusion



Individual coaching to artisan workers on themes such as sustainability, business strategy, product development and financing opportunities



Group workshops to trainees, covering topics such as social media marketing, leadership, and negotiation strategies



Pop-up shops to provide income-generating opportunities to trainee



ITAC

Discovery meetings to assess the current health of a business and identify their most pressing needs



Specialized one-on-one consulting to address a business' marketing, financial or HR priorities



Creation of new websites or redevelopment and enhancement of existing websites and online functionality



A feature in "Faces of the Garment District", a digital campaign aimed at building community and educating potential clients of the vast work manufactured in the district



MADE IN NYC

Skills-building workshop series focused on digital marketing strategies, sustainable fashion and intellectual property



Creative services, specifically offering professional product photography to companies through Made in NYC's Pop-Up Photography Studio



Community building and networking through a series of virtual convenings



NEST

Landscape mapping of district business strengths, challenges and priorities to inform Nest's programming



Business interviews to identify opportunities for expanding handmade items



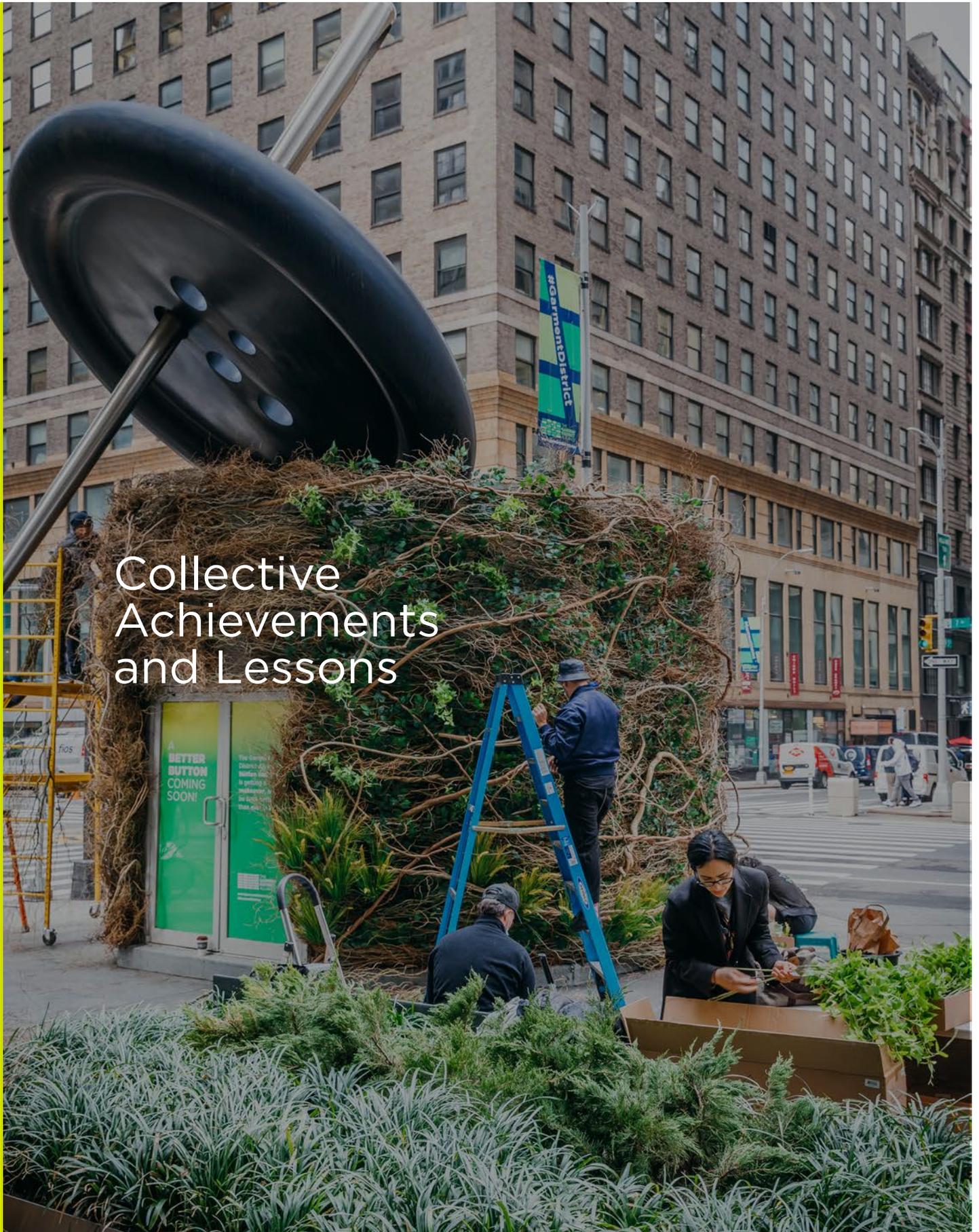
Capacity building workshops to address the most pressing needs identified through the landscape mapping



Engagement opportunities for artisans to connect with district businesses (specifically a Sourcing Guide and a virtual Artisan Showcase for businesses to display their craft)



LAUNCH OF THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATIVE



Collective Achievements and Lessons

In June of 2021, Custom Collaborative, ITAC, Made in NYC and Nest delivered their final services to district businesses and artisans as the first year of the Business Development Collaborative came to a close. Together, the cohort of program providers partnered with nearly 130 district businesses to reach their individual and collective goals, while capturing and sharing lessons to strengthen future programming.

YEAR 1 SUCCESSES



GATHER INSIGHTS ON DISTRICT WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

450+

businesses invited to participate in a survey on priorities, needs and challenges, with **105 businesses** sharing insights online and through in-person interviews

1

District Landscaping Report created and distributed to over **130 stakeholders**

48

businesses received one-on-one 'discovery sessions' to identify priorities and opportunities for consulting support



STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF DISTRICT BUSINESS OWNERS, ENTREPRENEURS AND WORKERS

45

businesses received technical consulting in strategy, finance, operations, marketing and HR

46

businesses received new or refreshed websites

16

specialized workshops and trainings delivered on topics ranging from legal rights to sustainable sourcing, digital marketing to advanced garment design

11

businesses received pro bono product photography sessions

25

businesses received discounts to access light manufacturing services



BUILD COMMUNITY AMONG DISTRICT BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY PEERS

1

Artisan Showcase held, spotlighting the craft of **50 artisans and businesses**, with nearly **60 participating buyers**

1

District Sourcing Guide created, featuring **95 artisans**, and distributed to nearly **800 businesses**

10

businesses participated in a virtual job placement fair, leading to **2 new hires**

6

mask making collaborations established with district businesses



ELEVATE THE DISTRICT TO UPLIFT ITS UNIQUE IDENTITY

20

artisans featured across **5 virtual 'pop-up' shops**

30

businesses featured in the "Faces of the Garment District" campaign

19

virtual events held, attracting **hundreds of attendees** across **7 industries** covering themes such as sustainability, PPE, fashion innovation and politics, social change, and anti-racism strategies



Innovation in the face of a pandemic

Two themes defined this inaugural year of the Business Development Collaborative: adaptation and collaboration. Implementing in the midst of a pandemic meant that the program providers not only had to rethink *how* they were going to deliver their suite of services, but also *what* services would most effectively meet the current and urgent needs of district businesses and workers.

The program year began with an intensive collaborative effort across program providers to [gather insights](#) on the major priorities, challenges and characteristics of district businesses.

Nest spearheaded the joint development of an online survey, which, in partnership with Custom Collaborative, was distributed to over 450 businesses and led to 105 responses. This outreach was successful, in large part, due to Nest's ability to quickly pivot away from online survey distribution (which was slow to gain traction, given the number of businesses that did not regularly use email or had temporarily closed operations) to in-person interviews. Nest also translated the survey into four languages (English, Spanish, Mandarin and Korean) to expand accessibility and ensure maximum inclusion of the diverse businesses that make up the Garment District.



Adapting to Virtual Delivery

Across the board, program providers quickly replaced in-person classes, workshops and outreach with virtual sessions, which posed both challenges - for example, how to design impactful networking events - and opportunities - such as new ideas for transferring industry knowledge across generations now that participants could dial into a session from anywhere. One such example of innovation came from **Made in NYC**, who adapted their Pop-up Photography Studios series - a free photo shoot of inventory for use in businesses' marketing collateral - to reflect the new realities of delivering programming during the pandemic. Front-end preparation with the photographers and businesses became even more important, where they relied on detailed creative briefs to guide arrangement of the product given that business owners could not attend the shoot in person. And instead of relying on live models, the Photography Studios leveraged mannequins to display products. These remote-only photoshoots required more time to align on logistics and process, but opened up new possibilities for creative collaborations.

A SAMPLE OF INSIGHTS FROM NEST'S GARMENT DISTRICT LANDSCAPE REPORT



57%

of business owners cited decreased sales and a lack of work as the top challenge facing their business



43%

of business owners ranked rent and overhead costs as the second most pressing challenge

“Rising rents are our number one bully. We depend on the district for its ecosystem of vendors and its proximity to the theater and fashion industries. The thought of doing enough business to survive somewhere other than the Garment District is daunting and not sustainable.”



OWNER OF GLOVE-MAKING BUSINESS

“There are not enough skilled workers for the demand. There is a huge demand for pattern-makers, seamstresses, cutters. There are not very many people who want to work in these roles.”



OWNER OF A DRESS COUTURIER



23%

of business owners listed outstanding payments as a top challenge



13%

of business owners listed labor force and skills gap as a top challenge

This effort resulted in a thorough and real time account of the unique challenges and strengths of the district's business community, published in Nest's [Garment District Landscape Report](#). Beyond this district-wide effort, **ITAC** was simultaneously conducting a series of intensive one-on-one 'discovery meetings' with district manufacturers to identify their most pressing priorities and connect them with expert consulting services as part of their Rapid Intervention Program. Taken together, these outreach efforts provided the Business Development Collaborative with a foundational understanding of the critical needs facing the Garment District in the immediate wake of COVID-19.

In response to the insights gathered through these diverse channels, the program providers adapted their services aimed at  **strengthening the capacity** of district businesses and workers.

For **Nest**, COVID-19 changed the nature of their collaborations with some businesses, pivoting away from longer-term planning efforts as originally envisioned (e.g. workforce development and skills training) to addressing immediate needs (e.g. access to information on grant and small business assistance programs or worker safety). In partnership with a legal counselor, they delivered two workshops focused on tenant rights and contracts/ outstanding payments, and they developed a list of [NYC legal resources](#) to help businesses access immediate legal and financial support. Nest also provided businesses with videography and photography services to support marketing and promotional needs.

“In Style ended programming with a new website, new social media accounts, an SEO keyword strategy, and a trained intern to continue implementation efforts. The 30-year-old factory that previously relied on word-of-mouth referrals has entered the digital marketplace and is already reaping the benefits of their effort. The company’s participation in our program has led to lead generation, brand awareness, and increased online visibility. While business is still down, the company’s ability to reach new customers has kept the doors open and employees onboard.”

—ITAC

ITAC supported businesses with one-on-one technical assistance across a broad spectrum of themes, often focusing on new direct-to-consumer, digital marketing and e-commerce strategies to ensure businesses continued to sustain their businesses through the pandemic. They helped district businesses establish and maintain a more robust online presence by building or refreshing their websites and improving digital marketing strategies that businesses could realistically deliver on.

Custom Collaborative responded to the moment by addressing issues of safety and equity for workers and business owners through their anti-racism training, all while providing specialized training sessions, focused on technical themes such as sustainability, surface design and embellishment techniques. They supported workforce development and job placement through a virtual job fair and fostered connections between their artisan trainees and district businesses with hiring needs. They also provided manufacturer discounts to district businesses to take advantage of Custom Collaborative's Worker Owned Cooperative, which provides light manufacturing services and a highly skilled workforce.

Made in NYC delivered a full slate of workshops, including courses on marketing collaborations; sustainable sourcing and green fashion strategies; and protecting intellectual property. They also hosted a DIY Photography Workshop series, training small manufacturers and makers in the basics of digital photography and editing services to better display creative assets -- a critical need given the pivot to online sales and retailing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the pause on most in-person gatherings, all program providers managed to successfully and creatively hold events that fostered connection and  **built community** across district businesses, entrepreneurs, and workers. **Made in NYC** held “Made in NYC Office Hours”, which provided an intimate and informal setting for business owners to connect with their peers and discuss a wide range of challenges relevant to their work. **Custom Collaborative** hosted an industry roundtable with city officials, district businesses and industry experts to share insights and lessons learned through COVID-19.

Nest concluded the year with an Artisan Showcase, delivered through virtual booths, panel discussions, and small in-person workshop tours, and the publication of a [Garment District Sourcing Directory](#) of district

manufacturers, suppliers, wholesalers and retailers - both aimed at educating buyers of the highly skilled handwork that resides in the Garment District and establishing sales partnerships between the two.

Individually and as a collective group, the cohort of program providers' services and events contributed greatly towards **elevating the profile** of the Garment District. **Made in NYC** hosted multiple public discussions to explore topics urgent within the fashion industry. In one event, Fashion is Political, **Made in NYC** highlighted the contributions of district businesses in making the First Lady's and the Vice President's inauguration outfits, reinforcing the Garment District's place on a global stage. Throughout the year, **ITAC** published a digital campaign, "[Faces of the Garment District](#)", aimed at educating potential clients of the vast work manufactured in the district. The profiles provide a unique look into how business owners got their start in the industry, the challenges they have overcome and the importance of being located in the district. **Custom Collaborative** conducted interviews and virtual studio tours with district businesses as a means to expand their reach to culturally and economically diverse clientele, thereby building new relationships and enhancing visibility within the industry.

Across all of the diverse services delivered throughout the inaugural year, program providers made important strides towards advancing their individual goals and realizing the Business Development Collaborative's vision of catalyzing business development in the district, ensuring the neighborhood's workforce remains competitive, and fostering the ongoing dynamism of the district.

"We learned that businesses shifted directions, shared resources, referred clients, and encouraged one another to remain open despite the challenges that we all faced. This is a testament to the fortitude and commitment to community that has made the Garment District famous world-wide."

—Custom Collaborative



Building Community and Combating Hate

In response to the rise in hate crimes against the Garment District's Asian and Pacific Islander community, the Business Development Collaborative providers collaborated with district partners to provide safety and training initiatives. **Custom Collaborative** offered anti-racist workplace consultation and diversity and equity trainings to district businesses, ensuring they had the tools needed to build awareness, assess current practices, develop strategies and implement changes. They also connected business owners with the Drivers Cooperative, a worker-owned ride share company, to help ensure the workers can safely commute to and from the district.

Looking ahead to this fall and beyond, **ITAC** will support Pauline Lock of InStyle USA to develop a Garment District safety coalition, aimed at ensuring safety among district workers. ITAC will provide an eight-hour strategy and brainstorming session, followed by marketing assistance to develop a digital promotional campaign. **Nest** has also joined district-wide initiatives to scale and improve current safety practices, including formalizing the 'buddy system', developing safety alarms, and starting language-specific WhatsApp groups to enhance communication amongst district workers.



Photo Credit: New York Embroidery Studio

Collaboration Across Program Providers

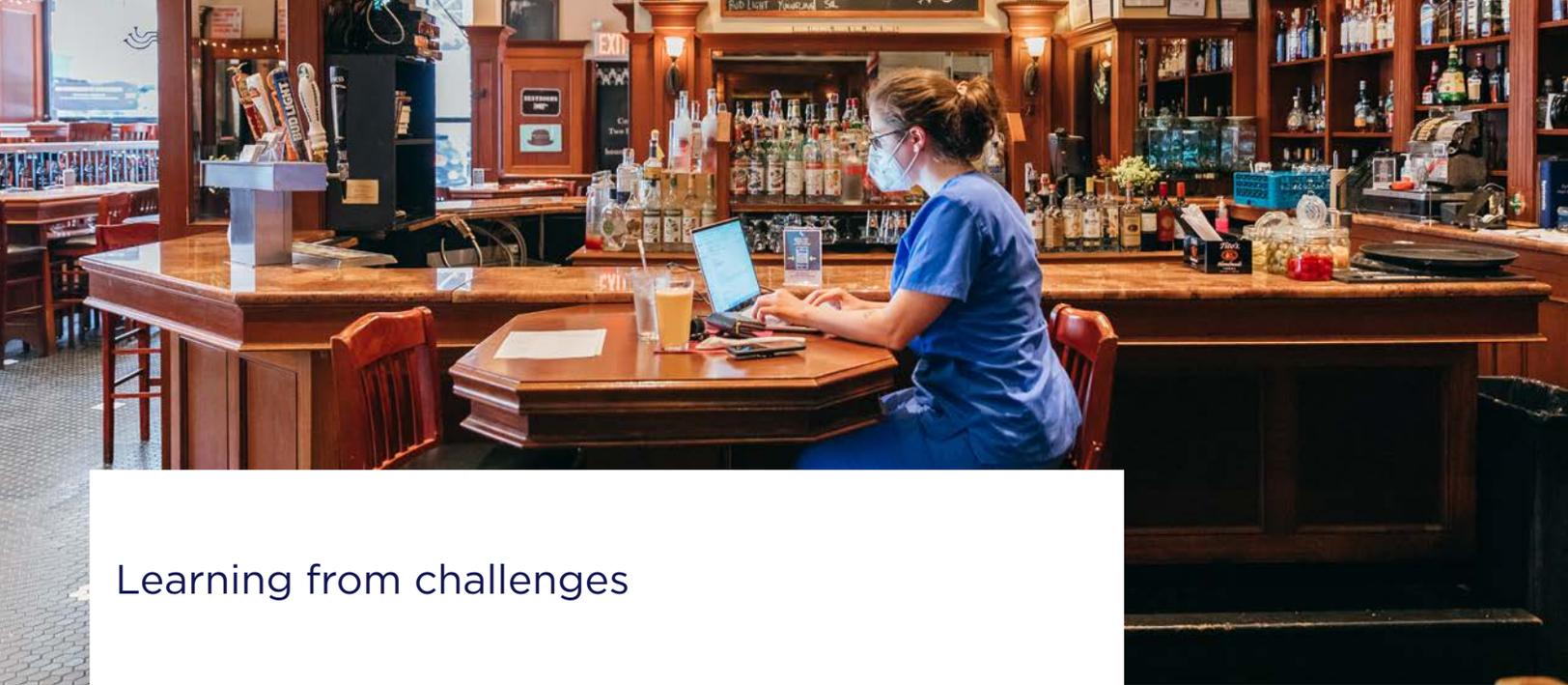
Located on West 36th Street, New York Embroidery Studio (NYES) is a full-service surface design studio and manufacturing facility - and a major collaborator with the Business Development Collaborative program providers.

The NYES team was an incredible partner to **Nest** during their landscape mapping by providing insight into the impacts of COVID-19 and the challenges associated with PPE production. In these interviews, NYES stressed the importance of connectivity within the Garment District, citing it as instrumental for PPE production during the height of the pandemic. Furthermore, NYES encouraged their employees to participate in the Nest interviews, demonstrating the company's support of research and programs that uplift voices of district businesses and artisans alike.

ITAC and **Custom Collaborative** partnered with NYES to address two critical issues. First, NYES identified a need for an updated website and new digital marketing strategies to support the company's pivot to PPE

manufacturing. Second, NYES wanted to promote equitable access to their services by strengthening their outreach to new clientele such as the minority and immigrant artisans served by **Custom Collaborative**, who often face financial or other hurdles to these services.

Working with **ITAC**, **Custom Collaborative** and **Nest** helped expand NYES' visibility and reach at a time when the pandemic had severely impacted business. **ITAC** updated NYES' website to more effectively showcase the company's traditional embroidery work and their significant investments in PPE production, while **ITAC's** digital marketing consultant provided strategies to bolster search rankings and social media reach. NYES was also featured in **ITAC's** Faces of the Garment District campaign, where CEO Michelle Feinberg detailed her journey in the fashion industry. To further broaden NYES' reach to diverse artisans and district businesses, **Custom Collaborative** conducted a live interview and studio tour, and NYES participated in **Nest's** Artisan Showcase.



Learning from challenges

While significant achievements were made in the Business Development Collaborative's first year, Custom Collaborative, ITAC, Made in NYC and Nest encountered a litany of challenges from which critical lessons for future years of the program have been distilled. Delivering their services during a pandemic and resulting economic downturn required flexibility, creativity and resourcefulness, and the shared experience of the cohort of program providers revealed three distinct but related challenges impacting the Business Development Collaborative:

Program Recruitment

Despite offering diverse services across themes, all program providers encountered difficulties recruiting participants. Some businesses were challenging to reach, given they had paused operations; others (especially in the beginning months of the pandemic) were rightly focused on 'day-to-day survival' and did not have capacity to engage in anything beyond their immediate needs.

Retention of Program Participants

Some program providers found that their participation numbers would drop off over time, in particular for workshops that were delivered over the course of multiple weeks. Program providers attributed this decrease to "Zoom fatigue" and the challenges of virtual engagement, more generally. Program providers also found that some participants had a difficult time balancing their commitment to the program with the daily responsibilities and obligations of running a business. As the economy opened back up, happily there was an increase in business activity; but it also meant less time to engage in the program.

Participant Capacity to Implement

Attending a course or engaging in a one-on-one consulting session is one step of the program; for certain services offered by program providers, the next step is then implementing on the program's teachings or recommendations, which some businesses struggled to do, given a lack of staff and/or time.

Throughout the year, the program providers utilized an array of strategies to overcome these challenges, and collaborated on recommendations to bring into future years of programming.

Outreach Strategy Recommendations

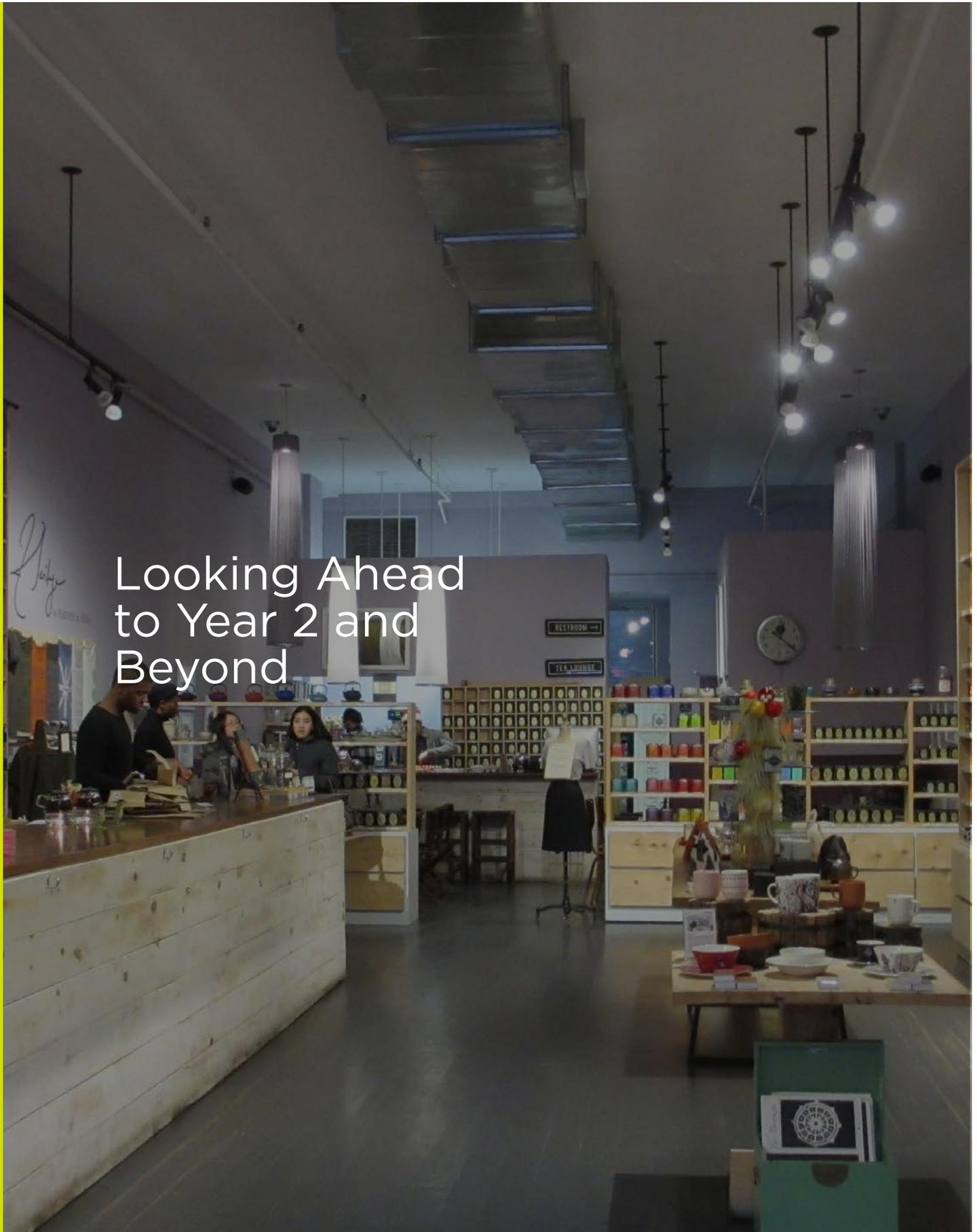
- Co-develop shared Business Development Collaborative marketing materials that each program provider can use in their outreach efforts. Ensure translations into district languages.
- Plan a broad program outreach strategy, utilizing social media, flyers and door-to-door visits. In-person recruitment is especially critical for building trust, providing clarification and ensuring alignment in services.
- Leverage existing relationships and networks, when possible, given the power of a recommendation or personal introduction.
- Co-develop a shared database of program outreach efforts (e.g. logging which businesses have been contacted and by whom) to ensure coordination and referrals across program providers.

Service Design and Delivery Recommendations

- When possible, begin the program with a survey (or other means of assessment) of district businesses' needs to inform the design and delivery of services.
- Provide services that are accessible and extremely targeted to the immediate needs of district businesses.
- Develop program materials in multiple languages and plan for interpretation/translation services, as needed.
- Explore a hybrid model of delivery that combines in-person and virtual.
- Ensure trainings, webinars and courses are recorded and can be viewed by participants on their own schedules - and ensure a mechanism (e.g. office hours, check-in calls, etc.) for questions and follow up.
- Explore adding an internship component to the program that strategically links businesses in need of additional capacity with rising students in need of on-the-ground experience.



Looking Ahead to Year 2 and Beyond



While the immediate shock of COVID-19 may have waned, the Garment District - like all neighborhoods across New York City - will continue to feel the impacts of the pandemic and the underlying challenges it has exacerbated in the months and years ahead. As the Business Development Collaborative enters its second year, GDA, RCC and the cohort of program providers are building on the experience gained over the program's inaugural year to deliver relevant and innovative services that will support the district's businesses and workers to weather the challenges of today and into the future.

In the upcoming year, two additional organizations will formally join the Business Development Collaborative cohort of Custom Collaborative, ITAC, Made in NYC and Nest:



E-Com Fashion: A niche agency providing consulting, design/branding and development services to fashion and luxury e-commerce businesses designed to help firms, large or small, grow their brand and e-commerce business in the online digital space.



Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT): An internationally recognized college for design, fashion, art, communications, and business known for its rigorous, unique, and adaptable academic programming, experiential learning opportunities, academic and industry partnerships, and commitment to research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

The collaborative, cross-sectoral delivery infrastructure established through the Business Development Collaborative's first year is a critical asset that will help the district navigate the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 economic recovery into Year 2. Together with GDA and RCC, these six organizations will take lessons learned from Year 1 to shape a continuum of programming that meets the evolving needs of the district - bringing a sharper focus on enhancing district businesses' digital marketing and e-commerce capacities, fostering more opportunities for business-to-business and artisan partnerships, and continuing to provide a range of responsive and resonant consulting services and training opportunities to the district's businesses, entrepreneurs and workers. In the year ahead, GDA's Business Development Collaborative will continue to play a vital role in strengthening the unique and dynamic ecosystem that makes the Garment District what it is today and in laying the foundation for a stronger, more resilient Garment District tomorrow.

