

# KNOX ST. STUDIOS

COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

2024 - 2025

WORKFORCE READINESS | ECONOMIC EQUITY | SMALL BUSINESS



# LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on the journey of Knox St. Studios, it brings me immense joy to share our story and accomplishments in this Annual Report for the year 2023. From our humble beginnings in late 2018 with limited means, including our inaugural grant of \$500, to achieving our best year ever in 2023 with over \$400,000 in funding and support, our growth is a testament to the unwavering dedication and commitment of our team.

Knox St. Studios calls Durham home, with a mission to champion social justice, equity, and inclusion. Our unique understanding of the economic and educational hurdles facing diverse and underserved communities has been the driving force behind our efforts. We guide individuals on a clear and forward path to economic mobility, stewarding entrepreneurship, and fostering the STEM educational skills crucial for thriving in North Carolina's dynamic ecosystem.

In 2023, we proudly partnered with key institutions such as the City of Durham, Duke University, and the Department of Commerce. These collaborations not only enabled us to create a significant community impact but also played a pivotal role in sustaining our dedicated staff. Noteworthy achievements include hosting two Techstars Startup Weekends, two Community Code modules, and expanding our reach to the Triad through collaboration with mission-oriented partners.

As we embark on 2024 and 2025, our goals are clear: to increase our capacity, make a lasting impact on communities, and forge new partnerships. We aspire to think globally and act locally, envisioning a future where Knox St. Studios continues to be a catalyst for positive change.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our exceptional team – Richard, Lee, and our amazing partners (Special Shout to the Duke Lift Lab team). Their dedication, passion, and hard work have been instrumental in our success, and I am honored to work with such a remarkable group of individuals.

In the words of our favorite quote, "Everything you see is just a thought manifested." At Knox St. Studios, it is our fervent desire to keep manifesting our thoughts and, in doing so, inspire others to manifest their own aspirations.

Thank you for your continued support on this incredible journey. Together, we will continue to make a lasting impact and build a brighter future.

Warm regards,  
Talib Graves-Manns, Founder & Executive Director

# OUR WHY

**We champion social justice, equity and inclusion. We employ our unique understanding of the economic and educational hurdles that affect diverse and underserved communities. We help people navigate a clear and forward path to economic mobility. We steward entrepreneurship and the STEM educational skills that are needed to thrive in the dynamic North Carolina ecosystem.**

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The Why – Sharing is the optimal approach to growth. We believe that intelligent design is inspired by the sharing of information. A community must be well informed.

The How – Through information sharing, teaching, and apprenticeship, we will create more equitable scenarios in community economic affairs and business.

The What – Knox St. Studios designs and facilitates instruction to educate community stakeholders (residents & business owners) on community asset creation and asset protection.



# FORGING FUTURES TOGETHER

With a lot of hard work and community support, we have seen big successes in 2023 forging several NEW partnerships to amplify our impact and drive innovation!



## Uniting for Impactful Partnerships



### **DUKE LIFT LABS**

- *Entered new partnership to deliver higher level STEM content to Durham Youth*



### **NC IDEA**

- *New partnership with NC Idea to offer Icehouse training to Incubator participants*



### **DEEPEND PARTNERSHIP WITH TECHSTARS**

- *Built position as the city of Durham's partner for TSW*



### **DUKE PRATT SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING**

- *New partnership with the Pratt School of Engineering to expand community reach and impact*



### **THE CITY & COUNTY OF DURHAM**

- *Secured City and County of Durham ARPA Support*



### **RDSW & AU**

- *New Collaboration with Raleigh Durham Startup Week and American Underground to host The Happiest Hour Event bringing tech and entrepreneurs together*



### **GOOGLE**

- *New partnership with google to launch 2 reskill programs (Google Certificates)*

# SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

## 2023-2024

### Impact Area - Economic Equity



## Startup Weekend: Health & Wellness

Knox St Studios, in partnership with Duke University, hosts a creative and collaborative three-day educational event where anyone from the community can develop and pitch new startup ideas.

The event localizes access to the resources and expertise of Duke University's innovation ecosystem. Our participants learn what it really takes to innovate, disrupt, and start a company from people who've been there.

Health disparities, inequities and socio economic factors are the drivers for this initiative. A healthy community is a strong community. Focusing on health and wellness fosters a sense of well-being, resilience, and empowerment. We believe that when individuals are healthier, communities thrive and can actively participate in social, economic, and civic activities.

At the heart of our Health and Wellness themed Techstars Startup Weekend lies collaboration. Health enthusiasts, entrepreneurs, and advocates with a common goal work throughout the weekend to elevate the well-being of our community and create lasting positive change.

From fitness innovations and nutritional breakthroughs to mental well-being initiatives, we see an array of community-driven solutions that have the potential to redefine our collective approach to a healthier lifestyle and more vibrant tomorrow.

Our participants receive exclusive access to our early stage accelerator program. Our winners receive valuable business support prizes that will encourage them to take the next steps in their business,

**METRICS: 45 participants served in 2023**



# SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

## 2023-2024

### Impact Area - Economic Equity



## Startup Weekend: Sustainability

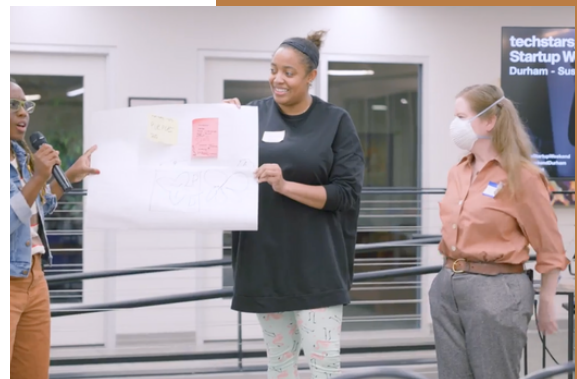
We define sustainability as the capacity to endure or maintain over the long term. In the context of environmental sustainability, it involves meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This Startup Weekend focuses on the pillars of human, economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Rooted in collaboration, Techstars Startup Weekend Sustainability is an event where visionaries, eco-enthusiasts, and change-makers unite to seed the future with green solutions. We see a showcase of ingenious ideas that promise to reshape our community's impact on the environment.

From renewable energy initiatives and waste reduction strategies, to eco-friendly innovations, our local minds are crafting solutions that echo our collective commitment to a sustainable future. From urban planning revolutions to grassroots initiatives, each pitch holds the promise of a more sustainable and resilient future.

These pitches are not just about innovative ideas; they're about building a sustainable legacy through shared effort and community engagement. This event is not just a competition; it's a rallying call for a community-wide commitment to sustainability.

**METRICS: 40 people served in 2023**



# SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

## 2023-2024

### Impact Area - Small Business



## E3 Durham Community Navigator Program

This program was launched in November 2021 to provide distinct recovery support for businesses negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and to address the longer-term and systemic biases, barriers, and bureaucratic challenges that underserved entrepreneurs face.

Through the collective engagement of the spoke organizations, the E3 Durham program has

- served over 415 Durham entrepreneurs who enrolled in program
- provided over 1,960 hours of one-on-one counseling
- conducted over 300 training hours; including 20 sets of cohort programs
- helped catalyze more than \$250,000 in loans and \$200,000 in grants for entrepreneurs
- Fundraising & secure construction contracts.



# SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

## 2023-2024

### Impact Area - Small Business



## The Knox St Studios Accelerator

The goal of the accelerator program is for small business owners In the Triangle region:

- have a seat at the table in the Durham business landscape
- achieve financial freedom and security in a sustainable way
- leave behind a family legacy

Entrepreneurship is a long road. Our participants gain fast traction in a community setting so that they can make big strides quickly.

The Accelerator Goals are to:

- help diverse led businesses and entrepreneurs prepare their ventures for the next phase of growth.
- Steward Mentor-Protégé relationships with business leaders.
- Equip Accelerator participants for business growth.

Past accelerator topics include:

- How to deliver a Winning Pitch
- Understanding your Market
- The Lean Canvas Business Model
- How to Access Funding and Investors
- Balance and Imposter Syndrome in Entrepreneurship
- Public Speaking Amongst Teams

**METRICS: 15 people served in 2023**



# SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

2023-2024

## Impact Area - Ecosystem Building in the Triangle Region



### The Google Black Founder Exchange Field Trip & The Happiest Hour

Designed in partnership with Google Black Founders Exchange (BFE), American Underground and Duke University, the BFE Field Trip brings together the chosen Black Founder entrepreneurs, Durham and Duke communities to discuss AI Integration, impact and best practices in business. Hosted at Duke Pratt School of Engineering, Black founders from across the country connect to the Durham business ecosystem for partnerships.

We expose the Black Founders Exchange participants to the region's business and commerce opportunities to connections points in RTP, and across the university system. We expect the output of our collaboration with the Google Black Founder Exchange to be collaboration and investment, and ultimately a value add for all parties.

**METRICS: 15+ people served in 2023**

The Happiest Hour Triangle community entrepreneur and tech event In collaboration with our partners at Duke University and American Underground fosters an environment for people to connect, unwind and relax.

We connect Creators, Innovators, Founders, Muses, Amplifiers from the diversity within the Triangle

Our expected outcome is for people from diverse industries to come together to find common ground and learn about the work that is being done in the Triangle among small businesses, tech startups and within the university community.

**METRICS: 100+ people served in 2023**



# SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

## 2023-2024

### Impact Area - Youth STEM Learning

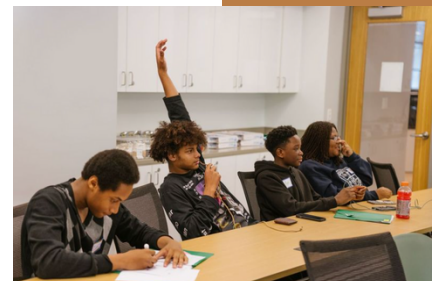


## Community Code

(Knox St + LIFT Labs Duke University Partners)

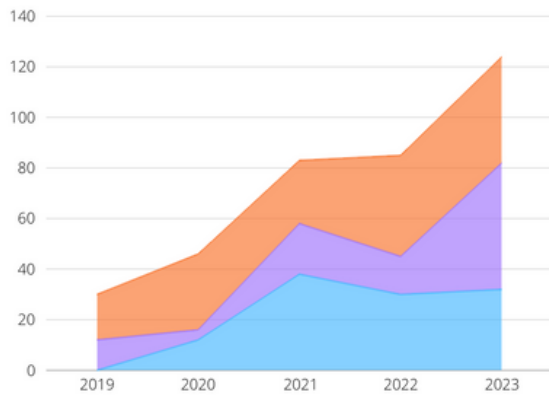
- Knox St Studios in partnership with Duke Pratt School of Engineering/Lift Labs hosts, "Community Code," our signature program which is a 5-week module for Durham students. We hosted two sessions in 2023. Our goal is to provide middle and high school students with a comprehensive understanding of Computer Coding, AI concepts + Design Fundamentals, while also emphasizing the importance of community stewardship.
- Throughout the program, the students engage in activities and exercises that teach them how to use AI in a responsible way. We also dive into the ethical implications of AI in reference to how content is created and what that means for those who are underrepresented.
- Students learn how their acquired skills are applied and utilized in the current job market and gain valuable insights into potential future career paths. In the final event, students showcase their projects, demonstrating their acquired skills and creative visions.
- We serve on average 20-25 youth per 5-week module.

**METRICS- 40 youth served in 2023**



# OUR IMPACT & IMPRESSIONS

## Our Impact In the Community



### Impact

We have supported over 400 entrepreneurs in starting and growing their businesses. 80% of our participants report increased revenue and growth for their businesses

[LEARN MORE](#)

### Impressions

We have touched over 1,200 community stakeholders across our six programs since 2018.

### Collaborations

We work with the city and county of Durham and 15+ organizations in the Triangle and Triad regions

We have supported over 400 entrepreneurs in starting and growing their businesses. 80% of our participants report increased revenue and growth for their businesses. We have touched over 1,200 community stakeholders across our six programs since 2018.



# OUR PARTNERS & FUNDERS



At Knox St Studios, we understand that impactful change requires a united front. Our journey is not a solitary one; it is a collaborative effort fueled by the invaluable support of our community partners and funders.

Our commitment to this work is strengthened by the diverse network of community partners and funders who share our passion for positive change. Together, we form a tapestry of collaboration, combining resources, expertise, and unique perspectives to tackle challenges and amplify our impact. These partnerships are the bedrock of our ability to create meaningful and sustainable transformations within our community.

Our gratitude extends to our dedicated funders whose unwavering support fuels the engine of change. With the support of our funders who are our champions for change, we have the freedom to explore innovative solutions, take calculated risks, and implement groundbreaking initiatives that push the boundaries of positive change. Their belief in our mission empowers us to dream big, innovate fearlessly, and implement sustainable solutions. Our funders play a pivotal role in ensuring the longevity and sustainability of our projects.

As we continue our collective journey toward a brighter future, we celebrate and acknowledge the indispensable role of our community partners and funders.

# NEW PROGRAM ROLL OUT 2024-2025

In addition to our regularly scheduled programming, Knox St is excited to add the following new programs in 2024.

## 1. Durham Rising Launch:

With the support from a grant from Durham County, The Durham Rising program launch includes 2 training modules.

- The Early Stage Accelerator, tailored to support small cohorts of early stage businesses. It is specifically designed to empower learners by immersing them in entrepreneurial experiences.
- The Support to Scale Incubator, designed for businesses 4-8 years of age, facilitating property ownership, assisting in securing growth capital, providing strategies for mergers and acquisitions, and offering guidance on succession planning.

## 2. The ReSkill Program:

With support from a grant from the city of Durham, Knox St Studios offers a unique program to reduce recidivism. In Durham County, approximately 700 people return home from incarceration every year. Statewide, around 38% of those who were incarcerated are re-incarcerated within two years. Our transformative 60 day journey aims to address this by providing a structured program that equips participants with valuable skills, fostering successful reintegration and reducing the likelihood of re-incarceration.



# NEW PROGRAM ROLL OUT 2024-2025

NEW PROGRAMS CONTINUED-

### 3. BWBL Triad Access Point:

Knox St Studio's Google Certificate Program, powered by Coursera, is aimed at-

- Fostering work-based learning and leadership/entrepreneurship training opportunities for small businesses within underserved communities
- Equipping individuals in the Triad region with the essential skills needed to excel in today's job market.

GET CERTIFIED NOW - 2024!

Google CAREER CERTIFICATES

EARN A CREDENTIAL THAT CAN LEAD TO JOBS IN HIGH-GROWTH FIELDS

\*TRIAD (NC) RESIDENTS ONLY\*

Presented By: KNOX ST STUDIOS

**COURSE OFFERING**

- Cybersecurity
- Digital Marketing & E-Commerce

**HOW IT WORKS**

- ✓ 8-10 Hours Per Week (All Virtual) - 3 Month Commitment
- ✓ No Costs
- ✓ Median Salary Across Certificates - \$76,000
- ✓ Guided Cohort Model with Instructor

SIGN UP NOW

Google

Over the 8 weeks of the Knox St Studios Google Certificate Program, participants have access to in-demand digital marketing and e-commerce skills with program support and wrap-around services.

### 4 . Embedded Stem Labs Initiative:

This is a collaboration between Duke University Christensen Center, Knox St. Studios, and Inspiring Minds, centered on STEM justice and the movement developed to redefine STEM education for middle school & high-school students.

It is designed to develop University staff capacity, create design-based, culturally relevant STEM curricula and provide community engagement opportunities for University students. The expected outcome of this partnership includes an increase in the number of opportunities underserved Durham youth have to access educational projects in STEM, and additional engagement opportunities for University students and staff.

# NEW EXPANSION | HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Q1-Q3 | 2024



### 5. Knox St. Studios is expanding its headquarters in Walltown, Durham NC, by constructing a 1,300 sq.ft second-story unit in Q1 & Q2 2024.

This community-centric space aims to provide health and wellness solutions for Triangle community residents, mimicking a home environment to enhance adoption of health practices. Key features include two wellness rooms with amenities like stationary bikes and aroma therapy, a dining area for health cooking courses, an open concept living area for various exercises and community gatherings, and an entirely technology-enabled space using IoT home appliances.

We are seeking sponsors to support our \$1.2MM program and build budget.

# OUR TEAM



At **Knox St Studios**, we are fueled by a shared passion for making a positive and lasting impact on STEM, entrepreneurship and workforce development. Our dedicated team of professionals brings together diverse skills, unwavering commitment, and a collective vision to create meaningful change in our community and beyond.

**Leadership:** Our leadership is at the forefront of strategic decision-making, drawing from years of experience in entrepreneurship and advocating for the underserved to guide the organization toward its goals. They provide visionary direction, ensuring that every initiative aligns with our mission.

**Program Development and Implementation:** The heart of our impact lies in the hands of our program development and implementation experts. This team collaboratively designs and executes initiatives that address the root causes of inequality with innovative and sustainable solutions.

**Community Outreach and Engagement:** Building bridges with our community is integral to our approach. Our outreach team establishes and nurtures partnerships, amplifying our reach and fostering collaborations that enhance the effectiveness of our projects.

**Fundraising and Development:** Financial sustainability is key to our ability to create change. Our fundraising and development is adept at cultivating relationships with supporters, securing grants, and organizing campaigns to ensure the resources needed for our initiatives.

**Volunteer Coordination:** At the heart of our operations is a dedicated group of volunteers. The volunteer coordinators ensure that our volunteers are well-equipped and motivated, contributing their time and skills to drive our mission forward.

We are committed to transforming challenges into opportunities, uplifting lives, and creating a future where access to opportunities are localized and there is equality in economic empowerment. Join us in this mission to help catalyze the change we wish to see in the world!

## Contact Us:

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