



July 16, 2026

Rutgers Business School
1 Washington Park, 7th Floor,
Newark, NJ 07102



Welcome to the 14th Annual Sustainable Living Empowerment Conference

“Nourishing Newark: Connecting Communities to Sustainable Food Systems”

Rutgers Business School and its Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation (RICSI), in collaboration with Newark Science & Sustainability, Inc., are proud to host this transformational community event. We have brought together an extraordinary assemblage of speakers and community participants who are committed to co-creating a sustainable future for Newark, New Jersey and beyond.

Our live conference shines a spotlight on grassroots-led efforts that are creating better health and wellness for our communities and environment. It features powerful, facilitated roundtable discussions on:

- Food Supply & Reducing Waste: Creating a Circular Food System
- Local Farms & Community Gardening: Building Sustainable Agriculture Practices
- Food as Medicine: Accessing Healthy Food & Nutrition Education
- Finding a Place in Food Systems: Applying Your Skills to Launch a Career or Business

The conference offers a valuable opportunity to advance these goals by bringing together stakeholders committed to equity, sustainability and collective impact.

A huge thank you to all attendees, speakers, and community partners for your presence and dedication to building a healthier, more resilient Newark. And to the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) Food Equity and Economic Development in New Jersey (FEED NJ) grant for making this possible.



Jeana Wirtenberg, Ph.D.

Executive Director
Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation



Tobias A. Fox

Managing Director,
Newark Science & Sustainability, Inc.

Agenda

9:00 – 9:30 AM **Breakfast, Networking, and Community Building**

9:30 – 10:00 AM **Welcome Remarks**

- Jeana Wirtenberg, Ph.D., Executive Director, RICS
- Tobias Fox, Founder & Managing Director, NewarkSAS
- Tara Colton, Chief Economic Security Officer, NJEDA
- Lei Lei, Dean, Rutgers Business School - Newark & NB

10:00 – 10:30 AM **Keynote Remarks**

- Mayor Ras J. Baraka, City of Newark
- Nicole Hewitt-Cabral, Chief Sustainability Officer, City of Newark

10:30 - 11:15 AM **Panel Discussion: Connecting Communities to Sustainable Food Systems**

Moderator: Jeana Wirtenberg

Panelists:

- Sara Elnakib, Department Chair/Associate Professor, Rutgers Cooperative Extension
- Tomia MacQueen, Master Gardener, Wildflower Farm NJ
- Carolyn Jones, HWB Healing Project Mobile Clinic/Herbalists Without Borders International Inc.
- Tobias Fox, Founder & Managing Director, NewarkSAS

Introduction of 1Huddle

- Sam Caucci, CEO, 1Huddle
- William G. Russell, Principal, Transitioning to Green

11:15 AM – 12:00 PM **Breakouts: Communities of Practice**

- **Food Supply & Reducing Waste: Creating a Circular Food System**
 - Facilitators: Sara Elnakib, Jeana Wirtenberg, Linda Kelley, Sara Paul
- **Local Farms & Community Gardening: Building Sustainable Agriculture Practices**
 - Facilitators: Tomia MacQueen, Nicole Calderon, Muneem Islam
- **Food as Medicine: Accessing Healthy Food & Nutrition Education**
 - Facilitators: Carolyn Jones, Twanna-Susan Brewer, Steven Parker
- **Finding Your Place in Food Systems: Applying Your Skills to Launch a Career or Business**
 - Facilitators: Tobias Fox, William Russell, Aaron Lasser

12:00 – 12:30 PM **Communities of Practice Report Outs, Next Steps, Closing Remarks**

- Communities of Practice Facilitators
- Jeana Wirtenberg
- Tobias Fox

12:30 – 1:00 PM **Lunch, Networking, & Community Building**

Overview

Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation (RICSI)

At the [Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation \(RICSI\)](#), we understand the urgency of today's complex societal challenges—and we see business as a powerful, yet often underutilized, force for meaningful change. More and more, research shows that companies dedicated to social impact are not only doing good but also outperforming those that are not.

RICS I brings together a rich blend of diverse perspectives, strategic locations, and strong networks to unite leaders from the corporate, nonprofit, and public spheres. By collaborating with top academic experts, we aim to drive forward the field of Corporate Social Innovation and prepare the next generation of purpose-driven changemakers. Our mission is to serve as a premier academic catalyst for solving society's most critical issues.

Our Strategic Approach

- **Educate** – We offer a robust mix of academic programs, including undergraduate and graduate courses, executive education, and workforce development opportunities that prepare individuals for impactful careers.
- **Collaborate** – Through strategic partnerships and applied learning, we work hand-in-hand with businesses and mission-driven organizations to advance Corporate Social Innovation practices.
- **Inspire** – By showcasing innovative models and sharing actionable insights, we elevate thought leadership and spark new ideas that create long-term value for both communities and businesses.



The Four Pillars of CSI

For more information visit RICS I's website, LinkedIn Page and Instagram Profile



Instagram: @rbs_csi



LinkedIn: @Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation



RICS I Site

Overview

Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc. (Newark SAS)

Established in 2013, Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc. (Newark SAS) is a mission-driven 501(c)(3) nonprofit rooted in Newark, NJ. The organization's work focuses on building long-term sustainability across generations by delivering educational programs, hands-on agricultural training, and community-based green development projects that promote eco-conscious living and improve access to healthy food both locally and globally.

Our mission is to empower communities by advancing food justice and sustainable energy solutions. Through a diverse range of programs, we focus on cultivating sustainable agriculture, promoting the use of renewable energy, and offering learning experiences that take place both indoors and outdoors. These experiences help participants apply knowledge in real-world settings and foster a deeper connection with nature. Guided by our five core pillars, we offer a holistic and interdisciplinary model of environmental education and community engagement.



NEWARK
SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY INC.
Creating Self-Sustaining Communities

- Sustainable Urban Agriculture
 - Renewable & Clean Energy Solutions
 - Green Building & Eco-Friendly Construction
 - Health, Wellness & Nutrition Education
 - Environmental Arts & Creative Expression
- NSAS Five Core Pillars**

For more information visit Newark SAS' website, LinkedIn Page and Instagram Profile



Instagram: @newarksas



LinkedIn: @Newark Science and Sustainability



NSAS Site

Overview

New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) grows the state's economy and increases equitable access to opportunity by supporting high-quality job creation, catalyzing investment, and fostering vibrant, inclusive community development. NJEDA works in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders to implement programs and initiatives that improve quality of life, enhance economic vitality, and strengthen New Jersey's long-term economic competitiveness.

This conference is made possible through the generous support of the NJEDA's Food Equity and Economic Development in New Jersey (FEED NJ) grants. FEED NJ is a \$30 million pilot program that aims to catalyze innovative, sustainable, and scalable food security and food access initiatives with high potential to maximize community-level impact. Having approved 73 organizations, FEED NJ is one of the largest investments in recent years dedicated to strengthening New Jersey's food security infrastructure.

Together, RICSI, NSAS, the City of Newark's Office of Sustainability, and 1Huddle, we continue to increase access to healthy food and nutrition education. Our work is continuing to strengthen the state's food security infrastructure by sponsoring the participation of several hundred families in a community-supported agriculture program that delivers fresh, locally grown produce; expanding and bringing together Communities of Practice, and supporting gamified digital food and nutrition education.



Welcome Remarks

Jeana Wirtenberg, Ph.D., Professor of Professional Practice & Executive Director, Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation



Jeana is Professor of Professional Practice in the Management & Global Business Department, Rutgers Business School, and Executive Director of the Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation (RICSI). She leads the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative and teaches Sustainability/ESG related courses in Rutgers Business School's MBA and Executive Education. Jeana is the lead editor and author of *The Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook: Building New Bridges* (Greenleaf, 2008; Routledge, 2019) and *Building a Culture for Sustainability: People, Planet and Profits in a New Green Economy* (Praeger, 2014). She is also the CEO of *Transitioning to Green*, a consulting firm for integrating sustainability into business practices. Jeana holds a Master's degree and Ph.D. in Psychology from UCLA and teaches Organizational Behavior, Corporate Social Innovation, Women Leading in Business, and other management courses at Rutgers Business School.

Tobias A. Fox, Founder & Managing Director, Newark Science & Sustainability, Inc.



Tobias A. Fox is the Founder and Managing Director of Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc., a nonprofit organization, and the Newark Community Food System. Fox is also a writer with a decade of independent publishing experience, a professional organizer, agriculturalist, visual storyteller, and coordinator of the annual Sustainable Living Empowerment Conference. For over ten years, he has shown collaborative grassroots leadership, passion, and dedication to sustainability and community growth. Tobias A. Fox conducts community events, presentations, and workshops on sustainable living, and assists local and global urban farmers and gardeners. Recently, his outreach has expanded to the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, the Philippines, and Africa. Fox was honored as one of the 100 People of Newark for his outstanding contributions during Newark's 350th anniversary, a project produced by the 100 People Foundation in partnership with PSEG Foundation. Fox's passion stems from personal experiences. Growing up in a household of sixteen with scarce resources, and losing his mother at 16 and his younger brother a year later, he was driven to make a difference. These challenges have strengthened his resolve to bring about significant change in his community.

Welcome Remarks

Tara Colton, Chief Economic Security Officer, New Jersey Economic Development Authority



Tara Colton is Chief Economic Security Officer at NJEDA where she spearheads initiatives to advance economic security and well-being for all New Jerseyans. Charged with broadening the state's economic development strategy to include food security, child care, maternal health and workforce investments, Tara leads a cross-functional team with NJEDA and collaborates across agencies to drive a whole-of-government approach to program design. Tara oversees over \$300 million in NJEDA's growing portfolio of programs to alleviate food insecurity and eliminate food deserts. She is also spearheading efforts to strengthen NJ's vital child care sector with more than \$140 million in grants to facility improvements, and to establish a Trenton-based maternal and infant health innovation center with an emphasis on addressing racial disparities in care. She plays a central role in the design and expansion of the \$25 million NJ Pay it Forward Program, which provides zero-interest loans to low-income NJ career seekers. Tara has more than 20 years of leadership experience in the public and nonprofit sectors, focused on developing and implementing innovative programs and services for workers, families, students, and businesses.

Lei Lei, Dean, Rutgers Business School - Newark & NB



Lei Lei received her Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Wisconsin (Madison) with a minor in Computer Science. Her research expertise includes supply chain network design and optimization, operations planning, scheduling, process recovery after disruptions, demand-supply planning, and resource allocation optimization. Lei has over 50 refereed publications – many appeared in leading journals such as Management Science, INFORMS Journal on Computing, Interfaces, IIE Transactions, European Journal of Operations Research, Journal of Operational Research Society, and Naval Research Logistics, etc. She was listed among ROI-NJ Influencers (2021, 2022, 2023), Top 50 NJ Women in Business Influencers (2021), ROI-NJ Influencer-Higher Education (2021), NJ Difference Makers (2020), NJBIZ Top 50 Women in Business (2015, 2023), 2023 Distinguished Achievement Award from her alma mater, College of Engineering, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the 2025 NJ ROI Women in Business/Influencers, and the 2025 NJ Power Education List. Lei became the Dean of Rutgers Business School (Newark and New Brunswick) in January 2015.

Keynote Remarks

Ras J. Baraka, Mayor, City of Newark



Ras J. Baraka is the 40th Mayor of the City of Newark.

A native of Newark, whose family has lived in the City for more than 80 years, Mayor Baraka's progressive approach to governing has won him accolades from grassroots organizations to the White House. With a forward-thinking agenda that reduced crime to its lowest levels in five decades, addressed affordability while maintaining steady growth, lowered unemployment, returned local control of schools after more than two decades, and replaced all 23,000 known lead service lines in less than three years at no cost to residents, Baraka has defied expectations since taking office in 2014.

Mayor Baraka is recognized nationally as a thought leader in the space of urban revitalization, and his commitment to reducing crime in Newark, reimagining public safety, tackling the city's housing crisis, and developing innovative and community-driven approaches to eliminating income inequality has solidified his status as one of the country's most progressive elected officials.

While serving as the Mayor of Newark, he also presides as the President of NJ Urban Mayors Association; Executive Board Member for NJ League of Municipalities; Co-Chair, National League of Cities Reimagining Public Safety Task Force; U.S. Conference of Mayors-Vice Chair for Ports, Transportation and Communications Committee; and Member, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Local Government Advisory Committee.

Mayor Baraka was educated in the Newark Public Schools. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and History from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and a Master's Degree in Education Supervision from St. Peter's University in Jersey City. His father, the late Amiri Baraka, was a legendary poet and playwright. His mother, Amina Baraka, is herself a renowned poet. Doting husband and father, Mayor Baraka is a published author who recently released the audible memoir "The Book of Baraka" and is well-regarded in the entertainment industry for his appearance on the Grammy-award winning album, "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" in his authentic role as an educator, and for his EP "What We Want."

**Nicole Hewitt-Cabral,
Chief Sustainability Officer, City of Newark**



Nicole Hewitt-Cabral serves as the Chief Sustainability Officer for the City of Newark, bringing over two decades of expertise in sustainability and community development. The daughter of Jamaican immigrants, her early experiences on her family's farm instilled a deep-rooted passion for the environment. She is also the founder and CEO of Community Action Strategies LLC, a consulting firm dedicated to advancing equitable, community-driven solutions to social and environmental challenges. Nicole has served in professional roles with organizations including Public Agenda, the Institute for Sustainable Communities, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Peace Corps, and the White House.

She holds a Master of Public Administration in Public and Nonprofit Policy and Management from New York University, and a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Policy from Hood College. She is an avid urban gardener, trained dancer, accomplished capoeirista, and enthusiastic cyclist. In the rare moments of free time, she can often be found keeping pace with her energetic four-year-old as he zips through the city on his scooter.

Panel Discussion: Connecting Communities to Sustainable Food Systems

Sara Elnakib

Department Chair/Associate Professor, Rutgers Cooperative Extension



Sara Elnakib has worked in the area of community nutrition as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist for over 10 years. Dr. Elnakib joined the Rutgers Cooperative Extension in the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences as an Assistant Professor in January 2015 and became the Department Chair in 2022. She has focused on food insecurity and improving food access in Passaic County as part of her role in the Passaic County Food Policy Council. She is also interested in food waste in institutional settings and how behavioral economics can be leveraged to reduce food waste. Previously, she served as the Health and Nutrition Director for a Head Start Program in Montclair, New Jersey. Dr. Elnakib earned her doctoral degree from the Rutgers University, School of Public Health as well as a Masters of Public Health in Health Education and Behavioral Science from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. She earned her Bachelors of Science from Rutgers University in Nutritional Science.

Tomia MacQueen

Master Gardener, Wildflower Farm NJ



Tomia MacQueen is an educator, organic farmer, and conservation leader whose work exemplifies sustainable land stewardship in action. With over 22 years in education and 19 years as an Edible Gardens Consultant, she is the owner of Wildflower Farm in Pennington, NJ. At Wildflower Farm, Tomia centers education and regenerative practice including organic growing methods, increasing biodiversity, improving soil health, and humane, conservation-based animal husbandry. Tomia is the founder of Healing Waters Land Access Project, which advances food security and conservation by providing land access, training, and mentorship to historically underrepresented new and beginning farmers. She serves as the pilot Coordinator for the Food Systems Literacy Program at Princeton Public Schools, as well as serving as a Board Member and Education Committee Chair of the Northeast Organic Farming Association - New Jersey, a founding member of the Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance, an educator with the Ira Wallace Seed School, and a member of the North Jersey RC&D Regenerative Farming Network.

Panel Discussion: Connecting Communities to Sustainable Food Systems

Carolyn Jones

HWB Healing Project Mobile Clinic/Herbalists Without Borders International, Inc.



Carolyn Jones is a holistic health educator and practitioner dedicated to bringing the message of natural wellness and self-care to the community-at-large. She also serves as the Coordinator of the HWB Healing Project Mobile Clinic under the auspices of Herbalists Without Borders International, Inc. Carolyn holds certifications in aromatherapy, flower essences, reflexology, and acupuncture detoxification therapy; she also teaches herbalism courses at the Matthew Wood Institute of Herbalism. In addition to teaching natural self-care workshops at senior centers since 2012, she has created workshops for the Cortelyou Library in Brooklyn that include a collaboration with Weill Cornell Medicine, where she serves as a Research Advisory Committee member, on cancer awareness. Her books, *Pick Up Your Bed and Walk: a Self-Care Guide for Improved Health, Incantations, and Medicine for Your Soul: Essential Oils, Hydrosols, and Flower Essences*, are available upon request. Website: www.behealed.info

Tobias Fox

Founder & Managing Director, Newark Science & Sustainability Inc.



As mentioned previously, Tobias A. Fox is the Founder and Managing Director of Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc. He is an essential voice on today's panel. As a leading architect of Newark's community food systems and a nationally recognized advocate for grassroots sustainability, Fox brings unmatched on-the-ground expertise and lived experience. His leadership in organizing the Sustainable Living Empowerment Conference and his international work in urban agriculture underscore his deep commitment to environmental justice, health equity, and community-driven solutions—making his perspective invaluable to this dialogue.

Video Introduction - 1Huddle

Sam Caucci CEO, 1Huddle



Sam Caucci is the CEO and Founder of 1Huddle, a workforce tech company that upskills, trains, and motivates employees through the use of science-backed, quick-burst mobile games. Sam has managed and coached sales and leadership teams for publicly held, private sector, and franchised companies across the globe for more than 15 years. In 2015, Sam founded 1Huddle on the belief that every worker deserves access to the job training, support, and mentorship needed to win on the job. With a diverse array of clients across the globe, 1Huddle has impacted people in a wide range of sectors. Key clients include the U.S. Air Force, UEFA, vineyard vines, Loews Hotels, ESPN, Audible (an Amazon Company), Novartis, Madison Square Garden, the City of Newark, and more. Put simply, 1Huddle is making training more fun, effective, equitable, and accessible for the entire workforce.

William “Bill” G. Russell Principal, Transitioning to Green



Bill Russell is a Principal at Transitioning to Green (TTG), LLC., specializing in sustainability consulting and training. Bill is currently leading the AI for Good: Developing a New Narrative and Framework for AI-Enabled Systemic Transformation research initiative, led by the Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation (RICSI). The research builds upon Bill’s prior research on how decision science methods might be applied to improve corporate ESG decisions and his work advancing TTG’s “Future-Fit Strategies for Sustainability” services. The goal is to develop AI-enabled tools and implementation services that align core corporate strategies and current decisions with forecasted environmental, social and technology risks and opportunities. Bill also serves to educate and train students and employees as they develop their awareness and sustainability-aligned skills required to lead project teams, corporate functions and industry collaborations to innovate and transform their work into sustainably-aligned value and outcomes.

Communities of Practice

As part of our NJEDA FEED NJ Grant, we are collaborating with four local Food Desert Communities (FDCs) in the cities of Newark, East Orange City, Irvington, and Orange/West Orange/Montclair to help ameliorate food insecurity. This project will develop and host events including this conference and subsequent follow-on gatherings for residents of these FDCs and beyond.

Communities of Practice

Events, convenings, and specific learning goals and activities will be coordinated through four topical Communities of Practice (COP)

- Food Supply & Reducing Waste: Creating a Circular Food System
- Local Farms & Community Gardening: Building Sustainable Agriculture Practices
- Food as Medicine: Accessing Healthy Food & Nutrition Education
- Finding a Place in Food Systems: Applying Your Skills to Launch a Career or Business

Today's panelists introduce each COP theme and the work they currently do. We will next build upon those introductions with deeper breakout sessions to share your thoughts and experiences. We will also be discussing initial ideas for educational topics, practical learning activities, and community events to introduce and promote the COP themes across each of the four FDCs as appropriate. Formal COP groups will be formed after this conference to further coordinate, plan and implement their practice specific initiatives.

Gamification and Action Learning Tool Kits

A strategic mix of relevant learning content; gamification and engagement activities reinforce content and make learning fun. Action learning activities allow learners to practice and put learned content into actual use. Each COP will contribute to action learning toolkits that will equip local leaders and residents with the necessary skills and access to resources for broader community education and implementation.

We have partnered with 1Huddle, a Newark-based gaming platform to develop and conduct a series of individual mobile phone delivered games and to facilitate community building and group learning through friendly gamified contests. Utilizing 1Huddle's AI-enabled learning platform, we will design, develop and widely disseminate food-relevant educational games to promote health-conscious nutrition and healthy behavioral lifestyles. Educational games utilizing 1Huddle accelerate learning times by 45 percent while significantly increasing knowledge retention. Today's attendees will download the 1Huddle app and experience the fun of gamified learning through the 1Huddle platform.

SPECIAL THANKS to our Program Committee

14

Jeana Wirtenberg, Ph.D.	Professor of Professional Practice, and Executive Director, Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation
Tobias A. Fox	Founder and Managing Director, Newark Science & Sustainability Inc.
Twanna-Susan Brewer	Data Management Coordinator, Newark Science & Sustainability Inc.
Deborah Flamengo	Program Coordinator, Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation
Muneem Islam	Sustainability Intern, Newark Science & Sustainability Inc.
Linda M. Kelley	Principal and Enterprise Ecologist, Transitioning to Green LLC.
Aaron Lasser	Sustainability Intern, Newark Science & Sustainability Inc.
Steven Parker	Sustainability Intern, Newark Science & Sustainability Inc.
Sara Paul	Sustainability Intern, Newark Science & Sustainability Inc.
William G. Russell	Principal, Transitioning to Green LLC.

We extend our gratitude to **NJEDA's FEED NJ** for funding the conference. We also deeply appreciate the generous donations to this event from **Whole Cities Foundation** and **Whole Foods Market**.

Thank You For Attending!

