

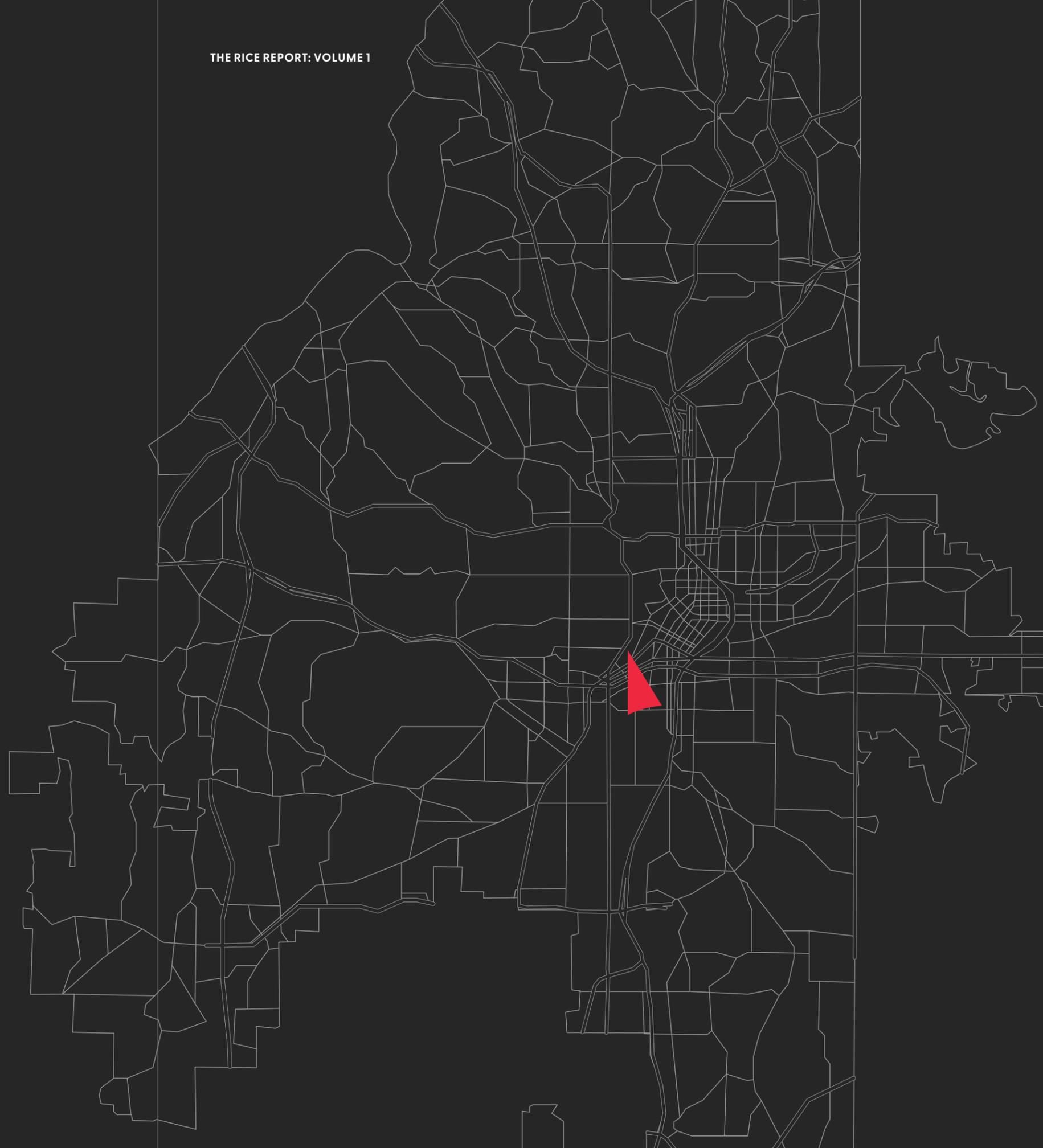


# THE RICE REPORT

**VOLUME 1**  
August 2023

Something special is happening on  
Atlanta's Westside.

**And we're just getting started.**





## A letter from our CEO

When the Russell Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (RCIE) opened its doors in 2019, our mission to inspire and empower Black entrepreneurs became more urgent almost instantly. The COVID-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, escalating cries for social justice, and growing economic uncertainty exacerbated the systemic barriers Black entrepreneurs face. It was a pivotal moment for the country and for us. As organizations shuttered their operations, we doubled down on our mission to respond to the needs of the Black business community. In 2021, we even changed our name to the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs (RICE), tightening our focus on the most important part of the equation—the entrepreneur.

In Atlanta, a city with a storied history of Black entrepreneurship and the nation's highest number of Black entrepreneurs per capita, Black people have largely been excluded from our city's vibrant economy. Only four percent of Atlanta's Black-owned businesses survive the start-up stage. The average value of a Black-owned business is less than one tenth the value of the average White-owned business. These facts are unacceptable.

I'm proud to say though, that RICE is already moving the needle on these disparities. A remarkable 46% of RICE businesses have thrived beyond the start-

up stage, more than ten times the national average. RICE businesses are valued at five times the average value of Atlanta's Black-owned businesses. So far, our Stakeholders have created hundreds of jobs, generated more than \$100 million in revenue, and driven \$450 million in total economic activity. Our work is gaining momentum.

In just four short years, RICE has expanded to serve more than 350 full-time Stakeholder entrepreneurs and reach more than 10,000 in our extended network. In this same period, we've expanded our staff from two team members to thirty-six and increased our operating budget from zero to more than \$6.5 million. This growth has allowed us to provide more than 5,000 hours of technical assistance and launch our Big IDEAS learning platform, Retail Readiness Academy, and Supply Chain Accelerator pilots. Going forward, I expect to see community wealth and shared prosperity grow exponentially as our organization serves more and more Black businesses.

Over the next 10 years, RICE aspires to develop a collaborative community of 1,000 Stakeholder entrepreneurs, create 3,000 new jobs, and contribute \$2 billion in new economic value to the Metro Atlanta region. We will continue to emerge as a collective voice and a trusted partner to some

Jay Bailey at Russell Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, May 2018

of the world's leading and most recognizable brands. We will generate more opportunity. And with every success and failure, we will share lessons and best practices with others.

Atlanta is at a crossroads—with RICE squarely at the center, occupying the nexus of access, opportunity, exposure, and impact. We are called to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs and invite all Atlantans, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, to participate and contribute.

Something special is happening on Atlanta's Westside. It's game time. I hope you will join us.

Farther together,



**James M. "Jay" Bailey**  
President and CEO



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# Why We Exist

Context

Our Roots

Our Vision and Mission

Our Aim





### Why We Exist

Each day, ambitious Black entrepreneurs embark on a journey to create businesses and build wealth. From start up through scale up, they encounter inequity and barriers to progress. Year after year, the data on Black businesses point to glaring gaps in access, opportunity, and exposure.

And yet, in a time when opportunity is not equally distributed, genius abounds.

**RICE exists to nurture genius and convert it into greater wealth, with an evidence-based, reliable method for building Black businesses.**

We believe it starts with truly seeing Black entrepreneurs and responding to their needs with an understanding, soul, and spirit not offered anywhere else.

RICE is creating a home for Black entrepreneurs.

We exist to build community wealth, with an eye toward future generations. Because success, for us, is not defined by “beating the odds.” It means changing them forever.

The Reality We Face

< 1/10

In this country, the median wealth of a Black family is less than one tenth that of the median white family.

11x

In Atlanta, the average White-owned business is valued at nearly 11 times the value of the average Black-owned business.

5x

In Atlanta, Black people are nearly five times more likely than White residents to be unemployed.

4%

Just 4% of Black-owned businesses survive the start-up stage.

< 1/3

On average, Black Founders start their businesses with less than one third the capital their white counterparts do.

Sources: US Federal Reserve, McKinsey & Co., National Bureau of Economic Research, Prosperity Now

The Outcomes RICE Seeks

A Sense of Belonging

Black entrepreneurs feel connected, engage deeply, and develop meaningful relationship networks

WHAT WE'RE TRACKING

- Stakeholder engagement (measured via qualitative survey)
- Center utilization + Stakeholder participation

Value Creation

RICE delivers value to Stakeholders who, in turn, create new economic value

WHAT WE'RE TRACKING

- Direct spend with Stakeholders; In-kind services
- New collaborations and partnerships between Stakeholders
- Revenues from RICE-affiliated businesses

Stakeholder Readiness

Stakeholders achieve mastery of critical business-building skills

WHAT WE'RE TRACKING

- Stakeholder readiness assessments
- Qualitative feedback from RICE partners

Scale & Sustainability

More Black businesses thrive over the long term

WHAT WE'RE TRACKING

- Business survival rate (vs. national industry averages)
- New jobs created by RICE-affiliated businesses

Early Proof Points

46%

of RICE entrepreneurs thrive beyond the startup stage, 10x the national average.

1,318

new jobs generated and sustained by RICE-affiliated businesses since 2020.

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission Economic Impact Assessment

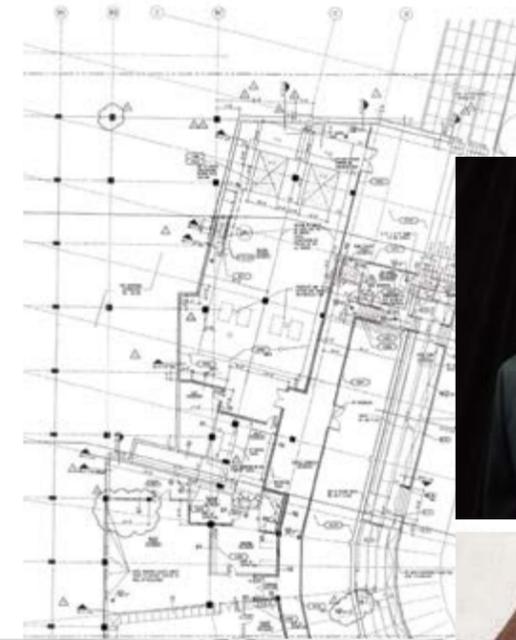
### Our Roots

The Russell Center reflects the spirit of an entrepreneur and leader who, through undeniable talent, a generous heart, and unwavering self-belief, achieved what some thought impossible.

RICE is named for **Herman J. Russell**, one of America's first Black millionaires and a figure who represents the epitome of influential Black entrepreneurship. As a business and civic leader, Russell helped shape the city of Atlanta as we know it today. His legacy includes a deep dedication to philanthropy and a passion for entrepreneurship and education. Mr. Russell saw entrepreneurship as a pathway to wealth and equity for the Black community and, for America, the key to sustained prosperity.

RICE lives on Atlanta's Westside, in the former headquarters of H.J. Russell & Company. The building is now home to the nation's largest nonprofit center focused exclusively on Black entrepreneurs.

**Our goal is to embody H.J. Russell's legacy of success rooted in service.**



Our Vision

**Black prosperity multiplied through business ownership**

Our Mission

**Build. Black. Business.**

We believe in Black business ownership as key to closing the racial wealth gap. We've made building Black business our mission because the long-term health of our community is at stake.

Our  
Aim

10

Years

1,000

Businesses

3,000

New Jobs

\$2 Billion

in New Economic Value

*Measurable, financial gains driven directly by the RICE ecosystem*

# Anchored in Belonging

**A top priority at RICE is to foster a sense of belonging for Black entrepreneurs, in an institution built by and for them.**

We believe an environment of belonging lets people be who they are, comfortably and confidently. We know that when Black entrepreneurs are exposed to creators and businesspeople who look like them, they tap a special source of power, energy, and resilience.

“

This morning, when I crossed the threshold into the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs, I felt an overwhelming sense of belonging. The positive energy from RICE’s staff and Stakeholders really brings out the best in me every time I’m in this ‘safe space.’

”

— Susan Simmons Stevenson  
RICE Stakeholder, CEO, The Lifecycle Network



# RICE is:

---

An institution dedicated to closing the racial wealth gap

---

A business generator focused on growth for entrepreneurs

---

A resource for corporations seeking business-ready partners

---

A driver of positive economic impact for the Black community

---

A new type of business community designed for the Black entrepreneur and focused on collective prosperity

---

A working lab developing a research-based approach to scaling Black businesses



# What We Deliver

Access, Opportunity, Exposure

RICE's Six "C"s

Big IDEAS

Our Space, Our Place

Our Community and Ecosystem



RICE provides:

- ▶ **Access**
- ▶ **Opportunity**
- ▶ **Exposure**

**Key ingredients every entrepreneur needs, but not every entrepreneur is offered.**

# RICE's Six "C"s

Our formula for developing Black businesses



## Community

RICE brings Black entrepreneurs together in a spirit of collaboration and service. In our community, entrepreneurs find support, have valuable exchanges, and unlock the power of the collective.



## Connections

RICE offers unique access to senior level networks and one-of-a-kind resources. We've engineered an in-house ecosystem of partners that accelerates entrepreneurs in real time.



## Curriculum

Big IDEAS is an individualized learning platform that addresses the whole entrepreneur, weaving together practical training with personal wellness and hands-on experience.



## Capital

RICE is addressing the challenge of access to capital by connecting banks, angel investors, VCs, and CDFIs with Stakeholder businesses that are investment- and loan-ready



## Coaching

RICE provides one-on-one time with seasoned entrepreneurs and business leaders. These advisors and mentors inspire our entrepreneurs to believe in themselves, dig deep into the work, and imagine the impossible.



## Culture

A culture of belonging, support, and freedom. We're creating a true home for Black entrepreneurs.

**We're doing things differently, with an uncommon, tailored approach to serving Black entrepreneurs.**

# Nurturing Big IDEAS

**Big IDEAS, our signature learning platform, serves entrepreneurs from start up through scale up. It's designed with intent to:**

**Meet entrepreneurs where they are**

We meet businesses where they are today—from early concept to growing business—and create pathways that lead them to where they want to be.

**Deliver transformation for the whole entrepreneur**

We emphasize real-world exposure and wellness to nurture confidence, resilience, and belief without ignoring the loneliness, anxiety, and isolation common on an entrepreneur's journey.

**Develop mastery**

We take a patient approach to ensure RICE entrepreneurs emerge from our experience with unquestionable knowledge, skills, and acumen.

**Offer continuous support**

We commit to entrepreneurs for the long term, providing support throughout the life cycle of their businesses. Our relationship with each entrepreneur allows us to deepen and shape our support as needed.

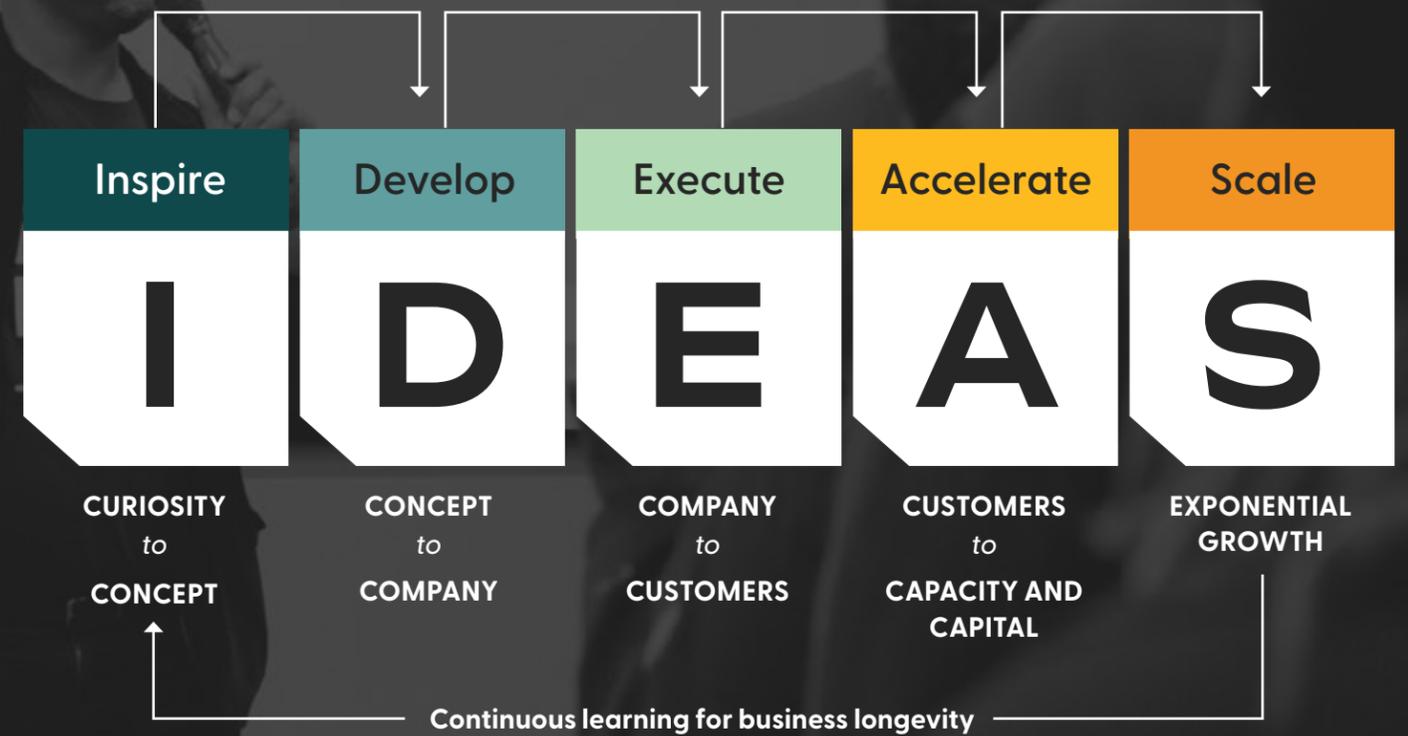
## The Big IDEAS Learning Platform

Big IDEAS guides each entrepreneur as they develop their action plan for creating a sustainable business—step by step, from ideation, through execution, to scale.

Entrepreneurs enter at the stage appropriate for them and progress at their own pace. Along the way, they are supported by a team of subject matter experts and a faculty focused on making mastery and excellence the default.

In addition to group learning sessions, our platform features unique hands-on experiences and holistic, community-driven development.

To assess and assure mastery at each stage, Big IDEAS adheres to a rigorous set of “Readiness Indicators.”



## THE BIG IDEAS LEARNING PLATFORM

# Hands-On

## Logistics Launchpad and Innovation Lab

### Taking Innovation to Market

RICE's Logistics Launchpad offers hands-on experience and exposure to the state of the art in advanced manufacturing and e-commerce.

At the Launchpad, early-stage and existing product-based companies build, test, produce, pack, ship, and store product all in a single location. In the process, entrepreneurs master sales management, inventory tracking, and order fulfillment for e-commerce.

The Launchpad also features an Innovation Lab that gives entrepreneurs access to 3-D printing for rapid prototyping. As entrepreneurs iterate on concepts in the Lab, they can strengthen their knowledge through complementary courses in product development and advanced manufacturing.

## Retail Readiness Academy

### Retail Ready

The RICE Retail Readiness Academy positions each entrepreneur and small business for long-term success through a comprehensive experience that:

- Focuses on the critical aspects of successfully scaling a retail business
- Covers all areas from sourcing and manufacturing to fulfillment and customer experience
- Provides hands-on learning in collaboration with retail industry experts and practitioners
- Employs a range of learning modes to create a transformational process

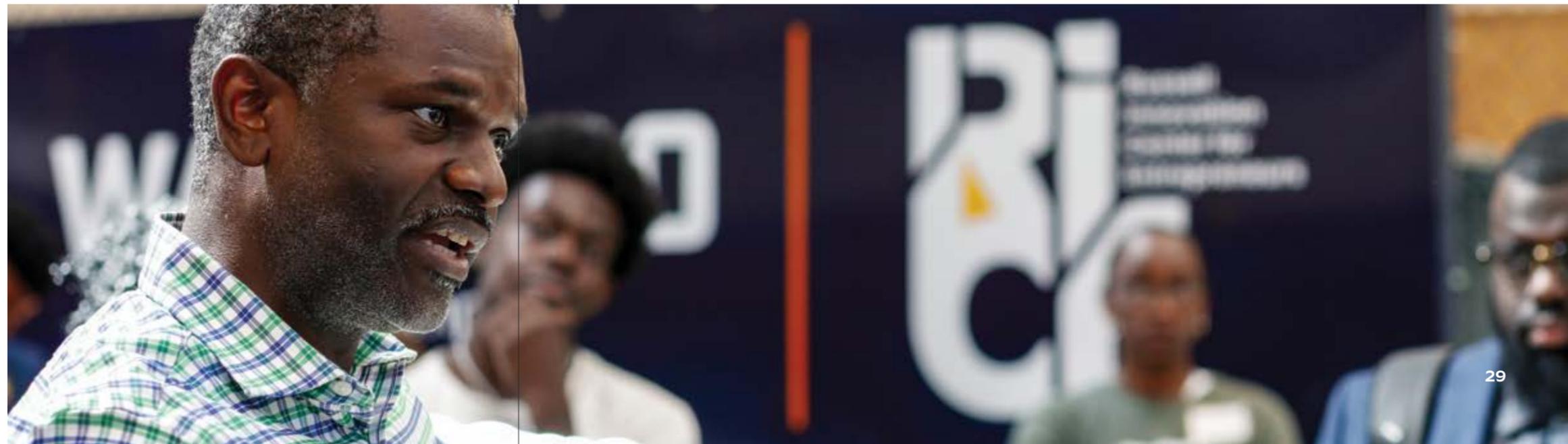
## Supply Chain Accelerator

### Contract Ready

Ongoing support beginning with an immersive, 10-month experience designed to:

- Create more access in purchasing and procurement for Black entrepreneurs
- Reverse engineer and demystify supply chain and contracting processes
- Engage with industry leading companies and executives
- Create RICE-certified businesses to complement SBA/GMSDC certification

Entrepreneurs leave the Supply Chain Accelerator ready to do business with Fortune 500 companies or government agencies.



# Holistic



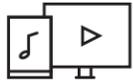
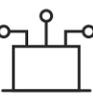
## Whole Entrepreneur Development

RICE believes our health is our greatest wealth. An essential component of the Big IDEAS platform is our focus on the whole entrepreneur. While we are helping entrepreneurs develop businesses, we are also helping them develop personally. Through Big IDEAS, we provide content, resources, and services that address mental health, emotional wellbeing, assertiveness and boundaries, the importance of relationships, and decision-making skills. Importantly, Big IDEAS encourages and motivates entrepreneurs to persist in spite of the challenging situations and difficult cycles they'll inevitably face.

# Community-Driven

## Industry Tribes

RICE's Industry Tribes are networking groups where like-minded entrepreneurs in similar industries connect to build relationships and exchange ideas, resources, and referrals. This community-driven component unlocks the collective power that resides here.

	<b>Entertainment &amp; Media</b>		<b>Public Service</b>
	<b>Food, Beverage, &amp; Agriculture</b>		<b>Real Estate &amp; Construction</b>
	<b>Manufacturing &amp; Distribution</b>		<b>Retail &amp; E-commerce</b>
	<b>Professional Services</b>		<b>Technology &amp; Innovation</b>

“

It's beautiful to see how quickly we've grown as a collective and are providing inspiration to others in business around the U.S. and abroad. We are making intentional, results-driven strides like no other! I'm always ecstatic to share that I am a Founding 100 Stakeholder of the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs.

”

— L'Angela Lee  
RICE Stakeholder, Founder, Honeysuckle Moon

“

RICE is constantly evolving, adding more space and ways for Stakeholders to run and grow their businesses. This place is always buzzing with activity and the energy is palpable!

”

— Dr. Bianca Kiovanni  
RICE Stakeholder, Owner/Founder, Simplicity Beverage Company

### Our Space, Our Place

RICE offers an environment unlike any other by concentrating the best resources available to entrepreneurs and growing businesses in one place. We offer purpose-built spaces for collaboration, convening, and innovation, as well as state-of-the-art resources like the RICE Podcast Studio for content creation, the Image Studio for brand development, and the Logistics Launchpad for e-commerce and rapid prototyping.

**Currently at 54,000 square feet, the Russell Center is the nation's largest nonprofit center focused exclusively on Black entrepreneurs.**

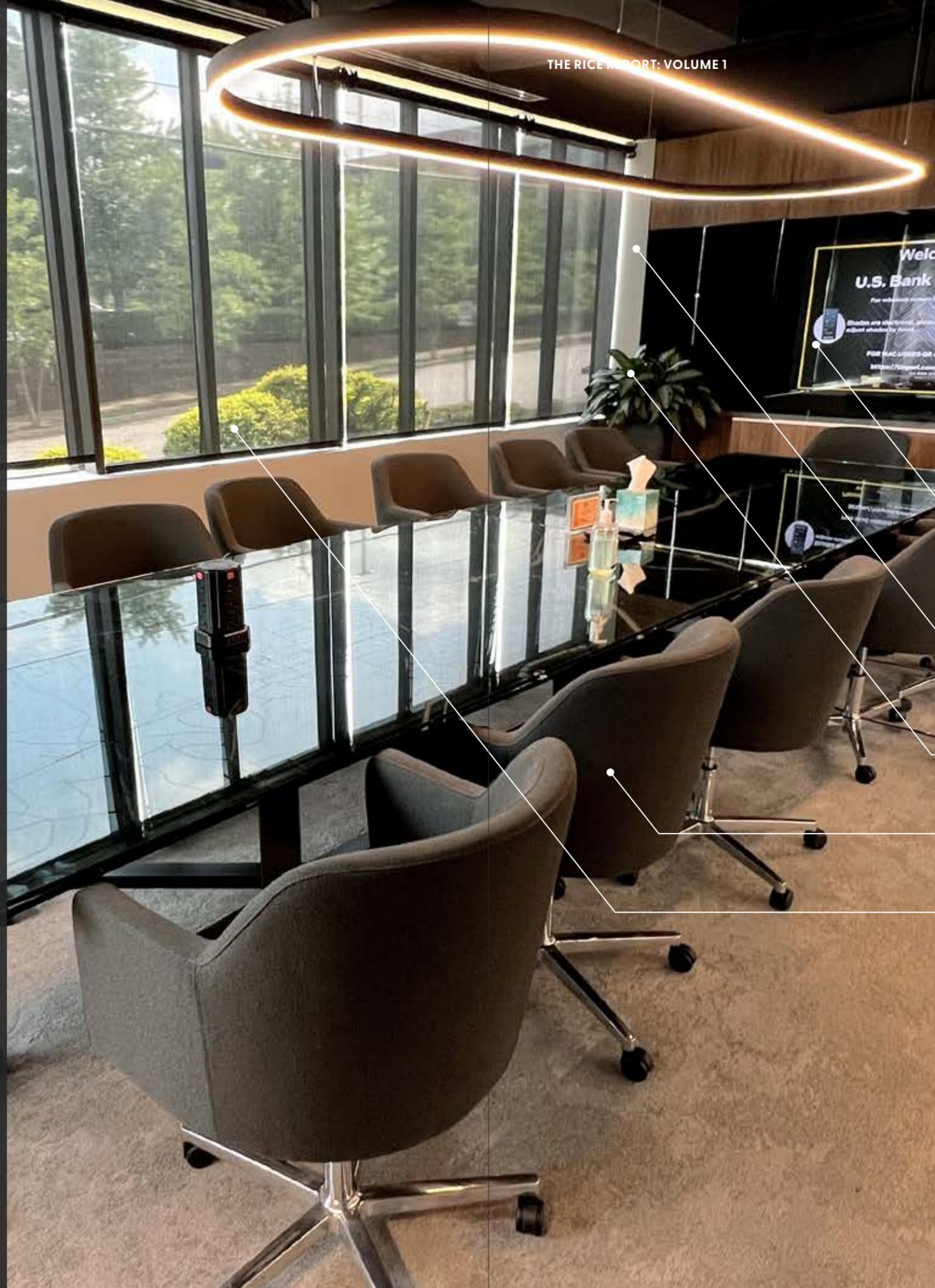
RICE welcomes thousands of visitors every month and hosts, on average, more than 25 community events per week. In this environment, entrepreneurs are surrounded with the tools and energy they need to move faster toward milestones.

# 80,000

VISITORS EXPERIENCED RICE IN 2022



# Building with Intention



RICE is fiercely intentional about enlisting Black entrepreneurs to help build, maintain, and enhance the Center. We make it our practice to choose Black-owned businesses that provide products and services ranging from construction management to food and beverage to IT consulting.

A/V Support:  
**INEX Systems & Designs**

Architectural Design:  
**Xmetrical**

Plants and Greenery:  
**The Plant Peddler**

Furniture Design and Manufacture:  
**Reclaimed Karma**

Window Treatments:  
**Raynard's Blinds Installation & Repairs**

# \$19.5M+

Direct spend with Black businesses  
to date



**The Honorable Andre Dickens**  
*Mayor, City of Atlanta*



**The Honorable Brian P. Kemp**  
*Governor, State of Georgia*



**Brian Cornell**  
*Chair and CEO, Target Corporation*



**Rosalind Brewer**  
*CEO, Walgreens*



**Jamie Dimon**  
*Chairman and CEO, JP Morgan Chase & Co.*



**Carol Tomé**  
*CEO, UPS*



**Robert F. Smith**  
*Chairman and CEO,  
Vista Equity Partners*



**Joe Gebbia**  
*Co-Founder, Airbnb*



**Thasunda Duckett**  
*President and CEO, TIAA*



**Tony Ressler**  
*Co-Founder and Executive  
Chairman, Ares Management  
Corporation  
Principal Owner, Atlanta Hawks*

# We Attract Excellence

These are just some of the individuals who have recently paid a visit to RICE. Every week, some of the world's most influential business leaders walk our hallways.

“

I am honored to be a part of the RICE community and I am excited to work alongside the RICE team to build a brighter future for Black-owned businesses.

”

—Morale Ocain

RICE Stakeholder, Founder, All Things Hair



# Creating a Home

## A Community That Embraces and Enriches Entrepreneurs

**Commitment and covenant** that connect RICE entrepreneurs to each other and to a purpose bigger than business

**Exchanges and collisions** through multiple community events and curated gatherings

**Uncommon access** to inspiration and expertise

**Collective power** created through close proximity and continuous collaboration

Inspired by Motown, Silicon Valley, the Harlem Renaissance, and HBCUs, we're creating the conditions for Black entrepreneurs to thrive.



# A Powerful Ecosystem

Our partnerships allow RICE to deliver a truly unique proposition: **Best-in-class resources curated to address the full spectrum of Black entrepreneurs' needs – all under one roof.**



# Our Impact

Impact Data

Stakeholder Stories



Something special is happening on Atlanta's Westside...

10,000

Entrepreneurs reached in 2022 through RICE and its partners

\$19.5M+

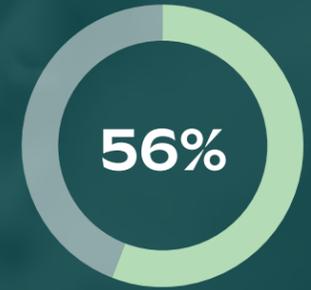
Direct spend with Black businesses to date

350+

Stakeholders



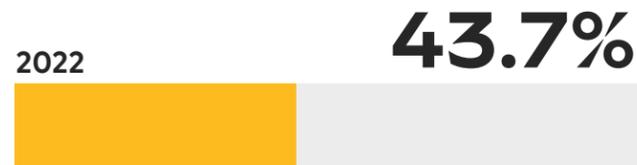
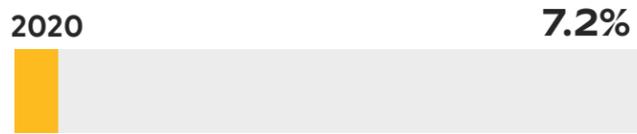
ARE BLACK OR PEOPLE OF COLOR



ARE WOMEN

OUR TOP SIX INDUSTRIES: CONSULTING, RETAIL, TECHNOLOGY, REAL ESTATE, HEALTH CARE, BUSINESS SERVICES

At RICE, businesses are growing...



Year-over-year growth in average Stakeholder revenue

\$114M

Total annual revenue generated by RICE Stakeholder businesses

\$2.725M

in grants awarded to Black businesses through direct connection to RICE

\$590K+

in equity investments raised by Stakeholder businesses

\$910K+

in loans secured by Stakeholder businesses

...creating value...

\$60M+

New revenue generated by Stakeholders since engaging with RICE

1,318

Jobs sustained by Stakeholder businesses since 2020

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission Economic Impact Assessment

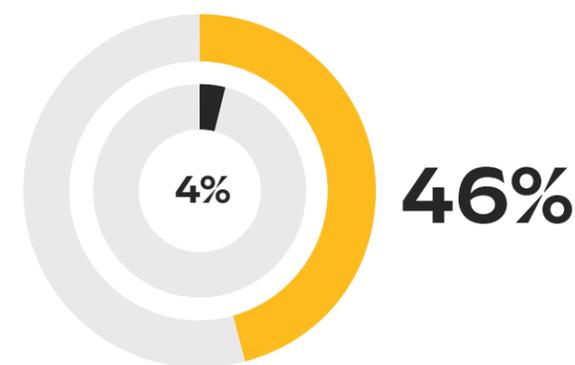
\$450M

Total economic activity since 2020

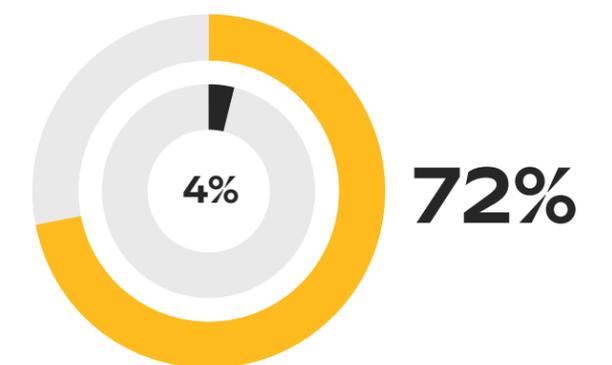
Total economic activity defined as a combination of gross and total county outputs, and disposable personal income for residents.

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission Economic Impact Assessment

...and outperforming.



of RICE Stakeholder businesses thrive beyond the startup stage. The average survival rate for Black-owned startups is 4%.



of RICE Stakeholder businesses employ one or more people. The average rate among Atlanta's Black-owned businesses is 4%.

## RICE STAKEHOLDER STORIES

## Affording Greater Access

### M-T Strickland & Metric Mate

Metric Mate is a visionary fitness technology company that has been a RICE stakeholder since 2019. Over the past several years, RICE has profoundly shaped Co-Founder M-T Strickland's business and journey as an entrepreneur.

RICE has walked alongside Metric Mate—from concept phase to the company's first \$10,000 in revenue to making an appearance on ABC's Shark Tank. M-T attributes a large part of his company's ability to overcome challenges and constraints to the combination of RICE's Big IDEAS learning platform and one-on-one time with experienced business advisors.

A defining moment for Metric Mate came when, through participation in RICE's Supply Chain Accelerator, the company was able to make inroads with a significant new customer. Through the Accelerator, RICE opened doors and shortened the path to decision makers at Walt Disney Company. M-T shared, "We didn't know what was feasible but now we are working on a pilot to take Metric Mate technology to the Disney ecosystem. I can honestly say that wouldn't have happened without RICE."

In addition, RICE's Logistics Launchpad has helped streamline Metric Mate's operations. Strickland says, "The Launchpad has allowed me to get my hands out of shipping and fulfillment. And the fact that we have access to personnel that can help us navigate complexity in our supply chain is so beneficial. For me, access is the number one thing [RICE] provides."

**"Being a part of the RICE community has been an absolute game changer. Through RICE, I have access to organizations and individuals that have already seen and been where we are going."**

—M-T STRICKLAND

## RICE STAKEHOLDER STORIES

## Opening More Opportunity

### Channing Baker & FS360

Channing Baker has had a remarkable journey of growth and success that he attributes to his engagement with RICE. Baker first encountered RICE in 2018, during his tenure as Director of Operations at general contracting and construction management firm, FS360. While leading the first phase of renovations at the Center, Channing became enamored with RICE's mission to uplift and empower Black businesses. Little did he know, this moment would mark the beginning of a life-changing relationship.

As fate would have it, being a RICE Stakeholder opened doors for an unexpected opportunity for Channing and FS360. Following an introduction from RICE, JP Morgan Chase offered FS360 the extraordinary opportunity to build out retail locations nationwide for the bank. With RICE's support, FS360 then navigated Chase's partner onboarding process quickly and smoothly.

**“We went through the process with JP Morgan Chase in a fourth of the time it normally would have taken. Our onboarding process took only 3 months...and 5 years later we're handling \$24 million worth of bank projects.”**

As a RICE Stakeholder, Baker has personally experienced remarkable growth. RICE has been the catalyst for his latest foray into entrepreneurship with Clayton Channing Consulting. He describes RICE as the place where he's learned the critical elements of running a successful business. And all the while, Baker praises RICE for the Center's genuine desire to see every entrepreneur succeed.

**“I am on track to reach my goals for the year because of the opportunities and exposure to new relationships I receive as a Stakeholder here at RICE.”**

—CHANNING BAKER





## RICE STAKEHOLDER STORIES

## Providing Uncommon Exposure

### Jamia Ramsey & Blendz Apparel

Jamia Ramsey, visionary Founder of Blendz Apparel, can attest to the fact that RICE is indeed a place where dreams take flight. Before becoming a RICE Stakeholder in 2022, Jamia and Blendz Apparel had already begun to revolutionize the dance industry with flesh-tone dance tights.

Since joining the RICE community, Jamia has gained valuable exposure to the Fortune 500 corporations that regularly engage with the RICE ecosystem. Through these experiences, Jamia has learned from some of the best, received direct assistance in building the Blendz brand, and deepened her understanding of her own business model and growth opportunities.

For example, Jamia and a delegation of RICE entrepreneurs got a glimpse into the future of retail and met with Walmart and Procter & Gamble executives during a visit to P&G headquarters in Cincinnati. While there, Jamia had the opportunity to contribute feedback and lend her voice as a Black entrepreneur. As a result of the exposure she received, Jamia came away inspired to position Blendz as a premium brand and get laser-focused on serving the needs of discerning dancers.

**“Overall, being at RICE, networking with different people, and getting to meet these executives helps relationship-wise and makes me feel great. Before RICE, I really didn’t have an opportunity to meet a lot of people in the corporate world, in entrepreneurship, or in business. With RICE, there are always things going on. You always have an opportunity to meet great people.”**

—JAMIA RAMSEY



# The RICE Team

# The RICE Team and Board remain dedicated to realizing our vision of Black prosperity multiplied through business ownership.

## Board of Directors

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**H. Jerome Russell, Jr.**  
Board Chair  
President,  
H.J. Russell & Company

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**Donata Russell Ross**  
President and CEO,  
Concessions International

---

**Sylvia Russell**  
Retired,  
Former President,  
AT&T Georgia

---

**Robert Benson**  
Partner,  
King & Spalding

---

**Carla Chaney**  
EVP, CHRO,  
Equifax, Inc

---

**Ann Cramer**  
Senior Consultant,  
Coxe Curry & Associates

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**Cynthia Day**  
President and CEO,  
Citizens Trust Bank

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**Vivian Greentree**  
Senior Vice President,  
Head of Global Corporate  
Citizenship, Fiserv

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**Ernest Greer\***  
Co-President,  
Greenberg Traurig  
\*Term ended 2023

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**Alfred McRae**  
President,  
Bank of America Atlanta

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**Sig Mosley**  
Managing Partner,  
Mosley Ventures

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**T. Dallas Smith**  
Founder and CEO,  
T. Dallas Smith & Company

## Team

**Jay Bailey**  
President and CEO

**Burunda Prince**  
Chief Operating Officer

**Paul Wilson, Jr.**  
VP of Innovation and Entrepreneurship

**Brittany Saadiq, CFRE**  
VP of Development

**Dr. Malcolm Muhammad**  
VP of Engagement and Outcomes

**Shalon Brown**  
Director of Marketing & Communications

**Shakiri Murrain**  
Director of Innovation

**Jasmine Tiara**  
Director of Community

**Raquel Hill**  
Executive Assistant to the CEO

**Maria Henry**  
Executive Assistant to the COO

**Karen Everage**  
Sr. Program Manager

**Lawrence Iweriebor**  
Sr. Data Analyst

**Dr. Dawn Sizemore**  
Instructional Designer/E-Learning  
Specialist

**LaShunda Campbell**  
External Communications Manager

**Ashley Scott**  
Internal Communications Manager

**Quintin Bostic**  
Program Manager, Supply Chain  
Accelerator

**Paul Mayberry**  
Program Manager, Accelerate  
Stage

**DeAndre Holt**  
Program Manager, Execute Stage

**Shanda Ingram**  
Program Manager, Develop Stage

**Fred Jones**  
Program Manager, Inspire Stage

**Nicole Brown**  
Program Coordinator

**Renyata Finney**  
Social Media Coordinator

**Justin Clark**  
Development Manager

**Janazya Thurman**  
Development Manager (Operations)

**Kenya Asbil**  
EDA Project Manager

**Justin Kirnon**  
Community Engagement Specialist

**Marlon Correa**  
Events Manager

**Crystal Clarke**  
Warehouse Manager

**Jason Collins**  
Graphic Designer

**Kela Taylor**  
Events Administrator

**Mike Cortez**  
Events Assistant

**Shakirah DeMesier**  
Technical Assistant

**LaTia Dozier**  
Staff Accountant

**Aisha Hassan**  
Engagement Specialist

**Jasmine Smith**  
Receptionist

“

As Chairman of the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs, I am driven by the belief that innovation is the heartbeat of progress. Our center serves as Atlanta’s nexus where ideas and aspirations converge, igniting the flames of entrepreneurship. It’s not just about fostering businesses; it’s about empowering visionaries to shape a better tomorrow through their creativity, dedication, and unwavering spirit. Together, we cultivate a community where innovation isn’t just a concept—it’s a way of life.

”

—H. Jerome Russell, Jr.  
Chairman of the Board, RICE  
President, H.J. Russell & Company

Build.  
Black.  
Business.

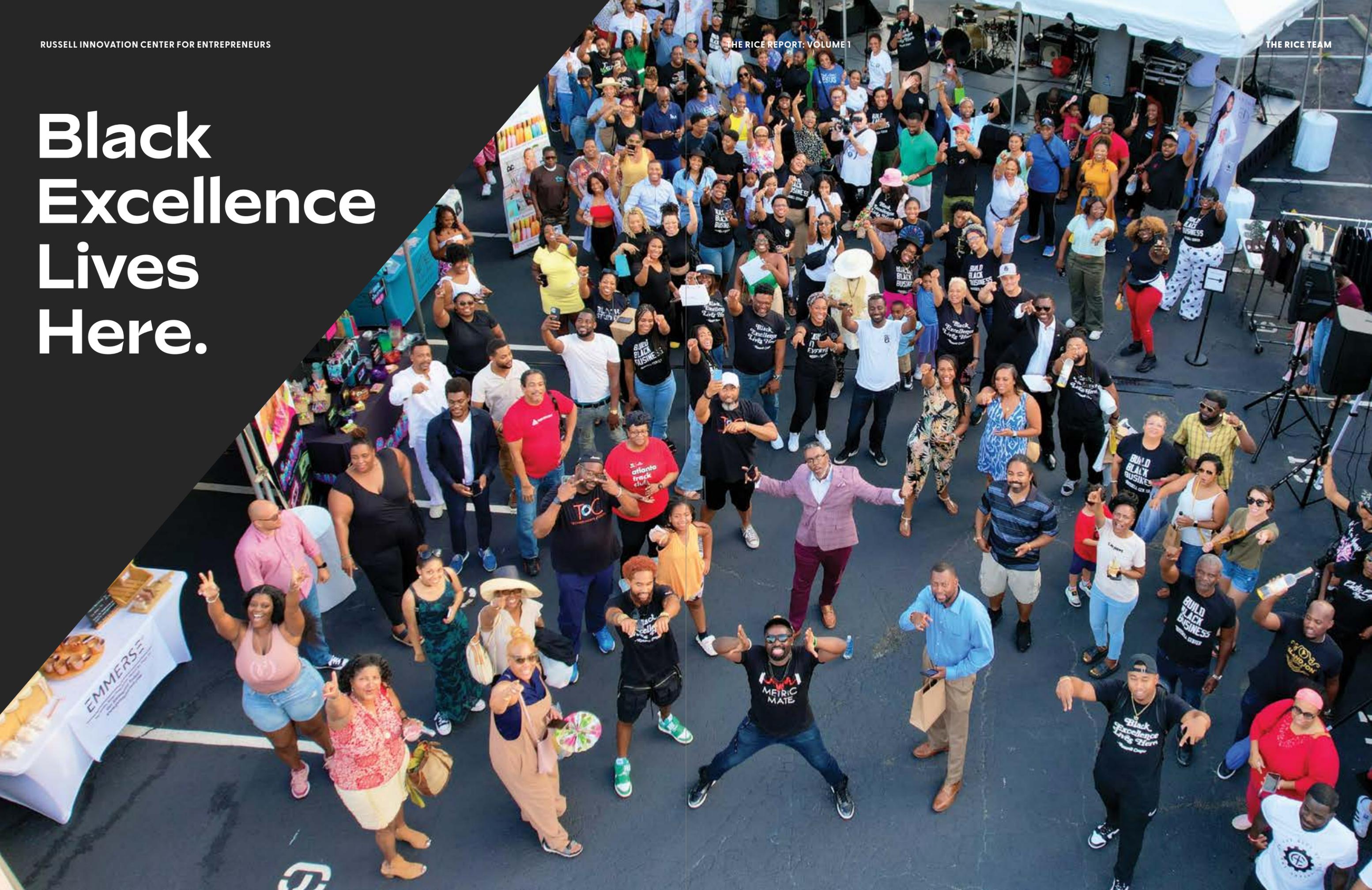


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# Black Excellence Lives Here.



**RICE**  
504 Fair Street SW  
Atlanta, GA 30313  
[www.RussellCenter.org](http://www.RussellCenter.org)

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