

**Annual Benefit Report  
2015**

Turnstile Tours, Inc.  
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89 East 2nd St, 2nd Fl  
Brooklyn, NY 11218  
New York State statute A4692-a, Article 17, Section 1701

# Introduction

## Who are we?

Turnstile Tours is a New York City-based social enterprise that researches, develops, and operates intensely-researched, site-specific tours and public programs in partnership with nonprofit organizations and consults with government and nonprofit institutions on public engagement and place-making efforts, including the development of tours, programs, and exhibits.

## What is this report?

Turnstile Tours was incorporated in New York as a benefit corporation on May 9, 2012. New York's benefit corporation statute provides a legal framework for for-profit companies that seek to create a general public benefit, defined by the state as "a positive material impact on society and the environment." In an effort to ensure accountability and transparency, all benefit corporations in New York are required to post a benefit report annually on their respective areas of general public benefit based on a third-party assessment standard. Based on analysis of Turnstile Tours' operations during the calendar year of 2015, this benefit report provides an introduction to the company itself; insight into the company's pursuit of general and specific public benefits in 2015; and quantitative and qualitative analyses of the company's performance measured against the metrics of the B Impact Assessment, a third-party standard that evaluates overall social and environmental impact, and the results are outlined below.

In addition to a legal commitment to make a positive material impact on society and the environment, Turnstile Tours has defined specific areas of public benefit through establishing a clear mission statement, as well as core commitments to guide the company in living up to that statement. As part of our public benefit mission, for each tour, Turnstile Tours partners with nonprofit organizations based in local communities, and dedicates at least 5% of all ticket sales towards supporting them. Through tours, public programs, and related multimedia content, Turnstile Tours seeks to raise awareness about the missions and work of our nonprofit partners.

## How was 2015?

This year we sustained our existing tour programs and continued to focus our efforts on improving accommodations for and targeting our marketing towards academic, government, and professional groups.

During the spring of 2015, Turnstile Tours was certified by the American Institute of Architects to issue continuing education credits for qualified designers, engineers, and architects for

select tours, including the Brooklyn Army Terminal Walking Tour, as well as the Sustainable Architecture & Industry Tour, Urban Ecology Tour, and Inside Industry Tours at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. We also invested in elevating the visibility of Brooklyn in the tourism and travel trade through joining the Tourism and Hospitality Executive Committee of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce to support the direction of tourism initiatives in the borough. We also represented the borough of Brooklyn by attending IPW, the United States' largest travel trade show to the world, as part of the Explore Brooklyn booth with the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. Furthermore, we participated in NYC & Company's Tourism Ready Initiative to build capacity for outer borough tourism, including attending professional development workshops and developing NYC & Company-approved marketing materials specifically for working with the travel trade.

At the Brooklyn Navy Yard, we collaborated with the Brooklyn Navy Yard Center at BLDG 92 to increase the number of companies that we feature on our monthly Inside Industry Tour series, a tour program that aims to raise public awareness about the role of the manufacturing industry in New York City today through the stories of industries and tenants at the industrial facility, including a behind-the-scenes visit to a featured factory or workshop space where principals share their stories and processes of designing and making things.

We expanded our tour offerings in 2015, including developing and offering a Brooklyn waterfront-themed boat tour series, a maritime-themed tour of Green-Wood Cemetery, and a public tour series of Essex Street Market. The Brooklyn Waterfront Boat Tour Series was offered with boat tour operator Classic Harbor Line out of Brooklyn Bridge Park and focused on industrial and environmental issues along Brooklyn's Waterfront, from the Newtown Creek to Bay Ridge. Each boat tour was co-led by a featured speaker, including representatives from the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, reporters from the website New York Environment Report, and photographer Nathan Kensinger. This year, we also began working with Green-Wood Cemetery to pilot a possible bicycle tour of the site that focuses on the waterfront and maritime history of Brooklyn.

During the fall of 2015, Turnstile Tours was commissioned by the New York City Economic Development Corporation to conduct research for, develop, and offer a free Friday evening public tour series of the Essex Street Market. Turnstile Tours conducted archival research, interviews with vendors at the market, published a series of blog posts about their stories, and delivered free Friday evening tours throughout the fall. It was a pleasure offering this tour series to locals free of charge, enabling Turnstile Tours to reach audiences that might not have participated if the tour was a paid tour experience. At the Moore Street Market, Brooklyn's only public market in operation, Turnstile Tours hosted Open House New York and the shared the stories of the vendors and community as part of *The Final Mile: Food Systems of New York*, a year-long programming series curated by the organization.

This year we were especially proud to take an important step forward in improving the hearing accessibility of our tours by acquiring assistive listening equipment and training our staff on how to assist visitors with using the portable devices.

In the coming year, we look forward to expanding our work to further advance public knowledge about the meaning of place; strengthening our infrastructure, training, and methodology; deepening our relationships with community; cultivating professional growth opportunities for our staff and the public alike; and reaching a wider range of customers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cindy VandenBosch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Cindy VandenBosch, Founder & President  
Turnstile Tours

## Mission Statement

Turnstile Tours seeks to advance public knowledge about the meaning of place, foster connections and understanding between people of diverse backgrounds, and inspire and reflect a culture of community participation through providing welcoming, well-researched, inclusive, and engaging educational experiences and resources to people of all ages and abilities.

### Core Commitments:

- **Conduct original research**

Turnstile Tours conducts original scholarly research with primary sources, including archival and field-based research, and documents place-based stories, both historical and contemporary, that are underrepresented in the public realm.

- **Contribute to public history**

We incorporate original research into projects, including tours, exhibits, public programs, and multimedia content, and are committed to depositing primary source materials in publicly-accessible archives for posterity.

- **Encourage cooperative learning and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and inclusivity**

We create experiences that facilitate active participation and are inclusive of and accessible to people with a wide range of learning styles, abilities, backgrounds, and knowledge.

- **Support nonprofit partners**

Turnstile Tours contributes at least 5% of all ticket sales to nonprofit projects or organizations based in local communities, educates the public about partners' missions and activities, and provides opportunities for customers and other Turnstile stakeholders to connect with our partners.

## Turnstile Tours: Year Four

Turnstile Tours operated a total of **417 public and private group tours for 5,794 visitors** in 2015. The company's tour portfolio consisted of different theme-based tour offerings built around four central programs: the Brooklyn Navy Yard, the Brooklyn Army Terminal, Public Market Tours, and Food Cart Tours of Manhattan. By the end of the year, Turnstile Tours achieved an overall five-star rating on both Yelp and TripAdvisor and was awarded "Top Rated" status again on Viator, the world's largest online booking platform for activities. Our attention to customers and the street vendors we work with was recognized by the "We're About People" Award by Contiki Holidays, a company that has sent thousands of clients on our Food Cart Tours over the last several years.

This year, we expanded our research efforts about New York City's public markets through **conducting original research about the past and present of Essex Street Market** on Manhattan's Lower East Side. We conducted archival research about the history of the market and interviewed and documented the stories of 11 vendors who are in the market today. Based on our research, we published a series of blog posts about the Essex Street Market and hope to use this foundation of research to support future public programs, podcasts, and exhibits about the site, as well as New York City's public market system as a whole.

We also continued to make major **contributions to the historical record and scholarship** about the sites where we operate tours. In efforts to expand the archival collection of oral histories at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, we recorded interviews with Paul and Barbara Fields, a Marine Corps family who had lived at the Brooklyn Navy Yard during the 1970's. We also met with staff from the Brooklyn Historical Society in March 2015 to discuss future accession of oral histories and other materials into their collections. We continued to research the Brooklyn Army Terminal's history, working through the 120+ boxes of materials about the New York Port of Embarkation held at the National Archives New York, and began to make arrangements for future research trips to the Army Transportation Corps Archives at Fort Eustis, Virginia and the Camp Shanks Museum in Orangeburg, New York.

**In efforts to increase inclusivity and hearing accessibility for visitors on all of our tours,** this year we acquired assistive listening equipment (ALDs) and are now able to offer visitors portable devices, complete with the option of either headphones or a neck loop that transmits directly to T-coil hearing aids, for any of our tours or public programs with advance notice. We have also begun distributing the portable devices to all visitors on our Inside Industry Tours at the Brooklyn Navy Yard to ensure that everyone can hear what's being said inside factory and workshop spaces, which often have very noisy equipment. We have also had visitors use the devices on our bus tours of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, especially people with mobility impairments who prefer to stay on the bus rather than disembark at some of the outdoor stops. By wearing the listening devices at those stops, they can still hear everything that's

being said by the guide and other visitors and can engage more fully with the overall experience.

Finally, 2015 was a banner year for **growing and deepening our relationships with our nonprofit partners**. For our Public Market Tours, we have developed a close working relationship with the management staff at the New York City Economic Development Corporation, which now manages both the Essex Street and Moore Street Markets, and with the Essex Street Market Vendors Association. In partnership with both these organizations, we launched a series of free public tours of the Essex Street Market on weekday evenings in the fall and winter to promote the market and its vendors. At the Brooklyn Navy Yard, we worked to develop a strategy for promotion of the Yard as a destination for the travel trade, promoting the site and its programs at the country's largest travel trade show and creating extensive marketing materials, including a new visitor map. With the Street Vendor Project, Turnstile staff volunteered extensively to help organize the Vendy Awards, and we continued to educate all of our Food Cart Tour participants about their latest campaign to increase New York City's cap on the number of street vending permits. Finally, at the Brooklyn Army Terminal, our public and private tours offered hundreds of visitors the opportunity to learn about the new development projects underway at the Army Terminal that will add nearly 1 million square feet of new space for industry and manufacturing. For the third consecutive year, our staff again volunteered to deliver free tours for Open House New York weekend, as well as Chashama Open Studios and several industry-focused events, reaching well over 1,000 visitors in addition to our ticketed customers.

## Measuring Impact I: Customer Feedback

Customer feedback is critically important to any business, and Turnstile Tours strives to be open and accessible to our customers to make providing that feedback easy and satisfying. In a thank you email following each tour, we encourage tour participants to share their feedback via online review sites, such as TripAdvisor, Viator, and Yelp, and welcome and invite direct emails or phone calls. We also solicit input from customers who have recently taken tours via an online survey that we distribute annually. We continually make improvements to tours, from narrative structure to accessibility needs to tour guide training sessions, in direct response to assessments of customer feedback.

In February and March of 2016, Turnstile Tours conducted our third annual survey of customers who had joined tours during 2015. The purpose of this annual survey was not only to gain insights on customer satisfaction and our marketing efforts, but also to assess longer-term impacts of our tours on our partners and the communities in which we work. The annual survey asks visitors to assess their level of knowledge on certain topics both before and after joining a tour, as well as to share what actions they might have taken inspired by the tour, including returning to featured businesses, making a donation or volunteering time to a nonprofit partner, or just discussing the experience with a friend or family member.

In total, **69 respondents completed the survey**, and the breakdown was as follows: 56% took the Brooklyn Navy Yard Tour, 20% the Brooklyn Army Terminal, 17% the Essex Street Market Tour, and the remaining 7% of respondents indicated either the Immigrant Foodways Tour, the Food Cart Tour, or the Harbor Cruise. Some survey respondents took more than one tour. Here are some of the highlights from the survey:

- When asked to rate their level of **satisfaction with their overall tour experience** on a scale from 5 (very satisfied) to 1 (not satisfied at all), **95% of respondents reported a 4 or 5, with an average rating of 4.64.**
- When asked to rate their level of **satisfaction with their tour guide** on a scale from 5 (very satisfied) to 1 (not satisfied at all), **95% of respondents reported a 4 or 5, with an average rating of 4.72.**

While the sample size of the survey was smaller than in previous years, online reviews were at an all-time high with 37 TripAdvisor reviews in 2015, including 33 five-star reviews and 4 four-star reviews. Several of the reviews were written by customers who had taken multiple different tours, such as two different public market tours or the Brooklyn Navy Yard and Brooklyn Army Terminal Tours. Almost half of the reviews (17 of 37) were of Brooklyn Navy Yard Tours, almost one-quarter (9 reviews) about the Brooklyn Army Terminal Tour, followed by Public Market Tours and Food Cart Tours with 7 reviews each. The adjectives most

frequently used in visitors' feedback were "knowledgeable" with 29 mentions describing the guides, and "interesting" with 20 mentions describing the tour experience.

While sharing knowledge is a key aspect of delivering a quality guided tour, we feel that providing an interactive experience that's rooted in discovery through the senses and through sharing stories, opinions, and expertise makes for an exceptional experience. Therefore, when analyzing reviews, we screen for specific examples of engagement or adjectives that describe the guide's enthusiasm, passion, and facilitation skills. For example, in 2015 one reviewer from Madison, Wisconsin visited the Brooklyn Navy Yard for a tour and described his guide Sarah, as, "super knowledgeable about almost everything on the site, and it was a real treat to see her interact and draw out stories from all of the other tour members who had their own personal connections to the Navy Yard and the whole neighborhood." We feel the best tours are those where visitors meet and learn from one another to help shape the experience.

Introductions provide a key foundation for getting to know one another and assessing interests and needs amongst the group. A Brooklynite on one of our tours described how, "Doug gave each of us time to introduce ourselves and say why we were there and what we wanted to learn about." This reviewer went on to describe the diverse interests of the group and how Doug managed it, "Although there were only 12 people on the tour, they ran the gamut in age, race, gender and knowledge: a retired couple on their way to Idaho, a young couple visiting from Poland, a man whose father worked on building the ships in the Navy Yard during World War II, a family whose Dad was interested in naval history and they got the tour for him for his birthday. As different as we were from each other, we all gave the tour 'two thumbs up.'" Half of this person's review was about being with this diverse group of people and experiencing the Brooklyn Navy Yard together.

Exploration using the senses is also key. Reviewers of the Food Cart Tours and Market Tours highlighted the diverse array of dishes they were able to taste, but engaging the senses can be more challenging at an industrial facility like the Brooklyn Navy Yard or Army Terminal. Over the years, we've integrated oral history clips for the bus-led tours and handling objects to bring stories to life. A visitor who came on the Urban Ecology Tour at the Navy Yard mentioned the multisensory aspect of the experience, "The tour also included learning about, smelling, and tasting a lot of the local plants making their homes in the BNY."

For some of our tours that are geared more towards adult audiences, we do sometimes struggle with engaging younger audiences on tours. A few reviewers spoke to this issue. One indicated that the Brooklyn Navy Yard Past, Present, & Future Tour was not something they'd recommend for visitors with children under the age of 13. On the other hand, another reviewer said of Doug, "He is a witty tour guide and was great with the three 8-13 year-olds in the group. We were a group of 12 and everyone enjoyed the tour." For our Brooklyn Navy Yard Tours, we have developed bingo activity boards for people of all ages who might want to do something more active. When properly engaged, we find that young people tend to ask the

best questions, oftentimes the questions adults are too afraid to ask, and that they test our knowledge and understanding of the places and themes we discuss on our tours.

## Measuring Impact II: B Impact Assessment

New York State requires all benefit corporations to select a third-party standard for assessing performance in their specifically-defined area of public benefit. In 2012, 2013, and 2014, we decided to adopt the nonprofit organization B Lab's B Impact Assessment, which we chose to use again in 2015. When considering an acceptable third-party assessment tool to adopt, the B Impact Assessment's broad scope and flexibility made it most applicable to our company, as we deem this the most comprehensive assessment tool for measuring our triple-bottom line performance (for information on why we originally chose this assessment tool, please see our [2012 Benefit Report](#)). The B Impact Assessment measures the company's practices and outcomes in five main areas, which will be discussed in detail below:

- Governance
- Workers
- Community
- Environment
- Impact Business Models

Companies that complete and pass this assessment (achieving a score of at least 80 out of 200) are eligible to become Certified B Corporations, a voluntary certification process that has been adopted by companies of all types, not just benefit corporations. New York State law does not require that benefit corporations become certified with a third-party standard, simply that they use a third-party assessment tool, and the B Impact Assessment is available online for any company that wishes to use it, regardless of whether they plan to become fully certified.

In 2014, we completed our B Impact Assessment for the previous year and submitted it to be audited by Lab B. **We achieved our goal of becoming a Certified B Corporation in January 2015**, a certification that will last until January of 2017. While New York State law requires us to complete a benefit report and use a third-party assessment tool every year, B Corporations are required to complete an audited assessment only every two years, so the evaluation discussed in this report has not been audited. We do intend to undergo a review by B Lab staff in January of 2017 based on our 2016 performance in order to maintain our B Corporation status.

### ❖ Governance

This section of the B Impact Assessment evaluates corporate structures, policies, and practices that are in place to define, measure, and evaluate the impact and implementation of the company's social mission. Corporate accountability and transparency with stakeholders are the two major areas of focus in the Governance section. Turnstile Tours was structured as a

benefit corporation, and was reflected in the 2012 report, the following information provides an overview of how social impact is built into the foundational structure of the company:

### **General public benefit**

- Turnstile Tours' commitment to social impact is reflected in the company's Articles of Incorporation and the by-laws. Turnstile Tours incorporated on May 9, 2012 in New York as a benefit corporation, broadly dedicating itself in the Articles of Incorporation to creating "general public benefit," which is defined by the state as having "a positive material impact on society and the environment." As a benefit corporation, Turnstile Tours is dedicated to an annual review of its overall social and environmental performance through conducting an assessment based on third-party standards.

### **Specific public benefit**

- Beyond creating general public benefit, benefit corporations may also designate a specific public benefit based on seven categories defined by the New York state statute. While Turnstile Tours aims to have an impact that creates benefit in several of these areas, including preserving the environment and serving low-income communities, the company identified "promoting the arts, sciences, or advancement of knowledge" as its primary focus in its by-laws. This area of specific benefit is adapted and incorporated into the mission statement of the company. Customers learn about Turnstile's mission during the introduction of each tour we offer and new employees are educated about the relevance of the mission to the operations and performance of the company at employee meetings and in orientation materials.

### **Turnstile's Mission Statement**

- Turnstile Tours has integrated an explicit commitment to social impact into its corporate mission and by-laws and includes the mission on its materials and website: "Turnstile Tours seeks to advance public knowledge about the meaning of place, foster connections and understanding between people of diverse backgrounds, and inspire and reflect a culture of community participation through providing welcoming, well-researched, inclusive, and engaging educational experiences and resources to people of all ages and abilities."

### **Corporate Accountability and Transparency with Stakeholders**

- Turnstile Tours **published its third annual benefit report**, which covered the calendar year of January 1 – December 31, 2014. The 2014 benefit report was filed with the New York State Division of Corporations and was posted on the company's website for stakeholders to access. The benefit report provided clear statements of mission, goals, and values; descriptions of our mission-related activities; quantifiable targets and

results related to our mission; consistent variables of measurement that allow for comparisons from year to year; and third-party validation of the company's mission performance.

- A self-selecting sample of **69 customers participated in an anonymous survey** provided feedback regarding the company's performance against performance indicators for our various tour programs. Turnstile Tours reviewed the survey results, combined with a review of online reviews for the year, and identified areas of improvement in efforts to create training tools and workshops for staff in response to customer feedback.
- Turnstile Tours investigated various options for submitting oral histories and other primary source materials to public archives and met with the Brooklyn Historical Society in 2015 to discuss the necessary procedures and our long-term plan for contributing recordings and transcripts to the museum's archives.

### ***Areas of Improvement:***

- Turnstile Tours stated in the 2014 Benefit Report that we would cultivate a Board of Directors in 2015 to provide oversight based on the company's overall performance and would begin meeting at least twice annually in the first quarter of 2015. Due to unforeseen challenges, this deadline was not met, and there are currently no external members of the board.
- Cindy VandenBosch of Turnstile Tours met with a representative of NYC Business Solutions in 2015 to learn about the process of applying to become an official New York City-registered Women-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE) and will pursue this certification in 2016.

### **❖ Workers**

This section of the B Impact Assessment evaluated Turnstile Tours' worker compensation, benefits, and work environment. Some notable achievements included:

- By the end of 2015, Turnstile Tours had **five hourly employees and one working owner**, one fewer employee than the previous year. We consciously decided not to hire an additional staff member in order to guarantee more hours for the individuals who are on staff.
- **Starting wages for hourly workers were \$20 per hour**, well above the minimum wage, living wage, and industry average. As most staff are paid on a per-tour basis,

rather than an hourly wage, the effective hourly rate for most workers was closer to \$30 per hour.

- While Turnstile Tours did not offer benefits beyond what is required by New York State law, we have been offering a **401(K) retirement plan** for our employees since January 2014.
- In 2015, Turnstile Tours officially instituted a **paid sick leave policy** for hourly staff, in accordance with New York City law.
- **Turnstile Tours held regular staff trainings** in 2015 to support professional skills development in public speaking, storytelling, and group management and facilitation. On average, staff members each received over 21 hours of training over the course of the year, including group training sessions and one-on-one trainings and observations.
- Staff were **trained in 2015 on how to use assistive listening devices** while giving tours, and we began using the devices in the fall for tours that visited factory and workshop spaces and for visitors who have hearing loss.

#### ***Areas of Improvement:***

- While we have a number of training materials, notifications, and written agreements that are shared with staff in accordance with all applicable laws, we would like to consolidate much of this material into a more comprehensive staff handbook and training manual in 2016.
- We would like to open more opportunities to our staff to develop and lead trainings for their colleagues so that we can take full advantage of the wide and unique range of skill sets on our team.

#### **❖ Community**

The portion of the assessment looks at community engagement through charitable giving, volunteering, local economic development, and working with local suppliers. Turnstile Tours is structured to benefit nonprofit partners through financial and in-kind contributions, as well as through public education and volunteerism. As demonstrated below, community engagement is central to our mission and work. Accomplishments in 2015 included the following:

- In 2015, **Turnstile Tours partnered with a wide range of organizations** on tour programs. For our regularly offered public tour programs, **in-kind support** was provided by Turnstile Tours to the Brooklyn Navy Yard Center at BLDG 92, the Graham Avenue Business Improvement District, the Brooklyn Economic Development

Corporation, and the Street Vendor Project of the Urban Justice Center. Turnstile Tours also developed and offered special tours as well that were offered in partnership with other nonprofit organizations. For example, we offered a boat tour series in the summer and fall that focused on Brooklyn's waterfront and featured a range of nonprofit organizations that are doing related work in such areas as green infrastructure, marine ecology, and resiliency along the waterfront, including the New York Aquarium, the New York Environment Report, and the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative. In addition to sharing their work on the waterfront via our blog, social media, and the tours, we collected email addresses for their e-newsletters from attendees that joined the tours. We also made significant donations of our tours, including a custom tour of Green-Wood Cemetery for their annual fundraiser and a private tour donated to the Waterfront Alliance's annual fundraiser.

- Turnstile Tours dedicated **153 hours of paid staff time towards supporting nonprofit partner organizations** through volunteer time, constituting more than 3% of total staff time. The largest proportion of this volunteer time was in support of the Vendy Awards, an annual fundraiser for the Street Vendor Project. Two of our staff members participated again this year in the Vendy Awards planning committee, and our Food Cart Tour Manager, Brian Hoffman, was compensated by Turnstile Tours to produce a series of web videos about majority of the participating vendors. Turnstile Tours and the Street Vendor Project collaborated on hosting a program for K-12 teachers from the Progressive Education Network's national conference that focused on street vending issues and advocacy in New York City.
- **Turnstile Tours contributed 5.0% of all company revenues to nonprofit organizations.** In terms of financial support, Turnstile Tours has a commitment to contribute at least 5% of sales of all of our tours to select nonprofit partner organizations. nonprofit partners that receive financial support include the Street Vendor Project of the Urban Justice Center, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, and the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation. In 2015, we also made contributions to UnionDocs, a documentary film collective based in Brooklyn that raised money to restore and reissue the 1984 documentary about South Williamsburg *Living Los Sures*, and to the Trinity Human Service Center, a non-denominational social service organization and food pantry affiliated with the Roman Catholic Parish of Most Holy Trinity-St. Mary's, where we led our annual Holiday Church Tour in January 2015.
- Turnstile Tours continued to provide **support to our nonprofit and small business partners through tours, printed materials, and online content.** We provide tour attendees with the opportunity to sign up for the e-newsletters of our partnering organizations, and we aim to raise awareness about their missions and programs.
- In 2015, **Turnstile Tours acquired assistive listening devices** to better meet the needs of visitors who have hearing loss. Staff members participated in trainings

focused on accessibility for visitors with disabilities, including learning specifically how to use assistive listening devices.

- **Turnstile Tours played an active role in 2015 in advocating for improved environmental and social impact standards across the travel trade.** At the New York Travel Festival in 2015, Turnstile Tours presented a case study to travel professionals entitled, *Structuring Tourism for Social Good*, offering an insider's look at how and why incorporating as a company with a social mission creates a long-term advantage and how companies that measure their impacts on society, the environment, and workers gives them a competitive edge in the marketplace. Cindy VandenBosch, President of Turnstile Tours, was invited in 2015 by the President and CEO of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce to join the borough's Tourism and Hospitality Executive Committee to help shape strategy for supporting and promoting growth of the tourism industry across the borough and also played an active leadership role in NYC & Company's Tourism Ready Initiative to develop tourism for the borough of Brooklyn.
- **In terms of economic impact, nearly half (47%) of Turnstile Tours' expenses** (excluding labor, per the standards set in the B Impact Assessment) in 2015 **supported local independent businesses**, the vast majority of which are based in New York City. Almost one in five dollars (19.4%) of Turnstile Tours' expenses (again, excluding labor) supported locally-owned and operated street vendors and public market vendors. In 2015, three out of ten of our largest suppliers for goods and services were street vendors and two were nonprofit organizations.
- **For the first time in our company's history**, 10% of our public and private tours were reviewed and accredited by an accreditation body. **Turnstile Tours was certified by the American Institute of Architects** to issue continuing education credits for qualified designers, engineers, and architects for select tours, including the Brooklyn Army Terminal Walking Tour, and the Sustainable Architecture & Industry Tour, Urban Ecology Tour, and Inside Industry Tours at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. In 2015, these accredited tours made up 9% of Turnstile Tours' total visitorship.

### ***Areas of Improvement:***

- With new relationships and programming at the Essex Street Market, we recognize that we have a lot of work ahead of us to familiarize our staff with the community of vendors and other stakeholders at this Lower East Side institution. As all of our tour locations continue to grow and change, it is an ongoing process of engagement and relationship building not only at the markets, but at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and Brooklyn Army Terminal. We hope that we can engage more staff members in attending community events, conducting interviews, and being connected with a wider range of stakeholders in these neighborhoods.

- In 2016, Turnstile Tours will seek to expand the number of AIA continuing education credits that it issues to qualifying architecture professionals through its public and private tour offerings.
- Turnstile Tours has served as a consistent and active voice within the tourism sector for city- or borough-led initiatives that incentivize responsible practices, including living wages for employees and developing tourism in the outer boroughs in a way that benefits local residents, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. Turnstile Tours will continue to educate peers in the tourism and travel trade about how to operate using a triple bottom-line stakeholder model and will advocate for increased engagement of small businesses, local cultural institutions, and neighborhood-based organizations as in tourism development efforts as tourism expands in the outer boroughs.

## ❖ Environment

This section looks at the company's environmental impact through areas including energy use, operations, supplies, and waste, as well as environmental education. Because Turnstile operates out of a home office, and we do not produce a product in a traditional sense, measuring our environmental impact can be a challenge using this assessment.

- **Environmental education** was a significant part our tour programming in 2015, with **12% of all visitors joining an environmental- or sustainability-focused tour**, such as the Sustainable Architecture and Industry and Urban Ecology Tours of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and our Brooklyn Waterfront harbor tours, featuring guest speakers from organizations such as the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative and the New York Environment Report.
- In 2015, Turnstile Tours offered **professional development training workshops** on STEM-related (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) topics to New York City public school teachers and to the Brooklyn Historical Society as part of a teacher training day at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.
- The company uses an **office-wide recycling program** that includes paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, metal, electronics, and compost. Turnstile Tours considers environmental impact when purchasing and printing paper-based materials. We recycle supplies in the office, including printing on scrap paper, purchased primarily recycled paper, and our printing supplier for marketing and tour materials uses vegetable-based inks.

### ***Areas of Improvement:***

- Closely tracking our emissions and waste remains a challenge while we operate out of a home office, but as we grow, we hope to find creative ways to reduce or counterbalance our impacts.
- We will look at ways to reduce the impacts of our use of disposable tableware and biodegradable trash bags for our food tours.
- Turnstile Tours will produce a written policy regarding the purchase and use of environmentally preferred products and practices for company purposes.
- We will continue to expand our portfolio of walking and and bicycle tours and return to tracking the emissions impacts of our tours in future reports.

## ❖ **Impact Business Models**

As a registered Benefit Corporation, Turnstile Tours was founded with a social enterprise model built into its corporate mission and structure, as was discussed in the Governance section above. Analysis of Turnstile Tours' performance in 2015 qualified the company for credit in three main categories defined by the B Impact Assessment:

- *Benefiting consumers through the support of general knowledge, art, or cultural heritage:* Turnstile Tours is dedicated to advancing public knowledge through its mission statement, has defined advancement of knowledge as its specific area of impact, and evaluates performance in this realm through tracking customer feedback, supporting the work of nonprofit partners and cultural institutions, and conducting original research to be publicly archived and disseminated.
- *Conserving the environment through providing information to solve environmental problems:* Many of our tour programs have a strong focus on issues related to the environment and sustainability, and we collect data from our tour participants to measure our impact on knowledge and engagement with these issues. Turnstile also engages a sustainability expert who searches for ways to integrate these topics into all of our tours and programs.
- *Donating at least 2% of sales to charity:* Turnstile Tours has an official policy to set aside 5% of all revenue from public and private tours to support nonprofit partner organizations, and in 2015, we met this goal almost exactly, with 5.04% of revenue going to nonprofit organizations.

The best way to demonstrate how Turnstile Tours has a lasting impact is by providing concrete examples that relate to each of our four core commitments.

- **Commitment to original research:** We regularly conduct research archival- and field-based research to uncover historical and contemporary stories we feel are underrepresented in the public realm. We work with our partners to conduct and archive oral history interviews with people who have connections to the sites where we work. We continue to disseminate our research through social media and our blog, where we have crafted dozens of articles that not only contribute to the public record about these sites, but also contain information about primary source material for future research.
- **Contribute to public history:** We incorporate original research into projects, including tours, exhibits, public programs, and multimedia content, and are committed to depositing primary source materials in publicly-accessible archives for posterity.
- **Encourage cooperative learning and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect:** We create experiences that facilitate active participation and are inclusive of and accessible to people with a wide range of learning styles, abilities, backgrounds and knowledge. Turnstile Tours is uniquely equipped to design accessible experiences, with **three staff members who have professional experience working with people who have special needs in education and at cultural institutions.** (For more on our commitments to accessibility and universal design, please see our [2012 Benefit Report](#)).
- **Support nonprofit partners:** In addition to providing significant contributions of volunteer time and money to our nonprofit partners, we also work to expand their mission and capacity, and reach a wider audience.
- In 2015, 40% of all private tours were for educational or nonprofit groups, and the vast majority of these were offered at a discounted rate. This far exceeded our goal of 33%, set in 2013, and we have increased this percentage every year since 2012, when these groups made up just 12%.

***Areas of Improvement:***

- Complete plans and policies for long-term deposit of original primary source materials in the appropriate public archives.
- We would like to continue and improve our ongoing trainings with our staff to make sure that they are equipped with up-to-date information about the work of our nonprofit partners.