

**Annual Benefit Report
2014**

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 company that researches, develops, and operates intensely-researched, site-specific tours and public programs in partnership with non-profit and community organizations.

What do we do?

Turnstile Tours' experiences are carefully crafted around historical and contemporary themes ranging from green infrastructure and sustainable technologies at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, to the role of public markets in nurturing immigrant-owned businesses, to the stories of hard-working street vendors who serve hundreds of thousands of meals to working New Yorkers daily. Each tour requires initial and ongoing attention to in-depth research with primary sources, oftentimes drawing from oral histories, interviews, historical newspapers, community-based field research, and public archives. Because we offer interactive, inclusive experiences, tour attendees often contribute greatly to deepening our knowledge base about a particular topic or location. We seek to encourage participation on the tours and in our research efforts to uncover stories that are underrepresented.

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 2014, this benefit report provides an introduction to the company itself; insight into the company's pursuit of general and specific public benefits in 2014; 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 non-profit 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 non-profit partners. Our partners for our 2014 tour programs included the Brooklyn Navy Yard Center at BLDG 92, the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, the Urban Justice Center's Street Vendor Project, the Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation, the Graham Avenue BID, and the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

How was 2014?

2014 was a year of building capacity. This included expanding tour offerings for academic, professional, and other specialized audiences, as well as delivering services such as trainings and content development to cultural institutions. We launched two new tour programs, a World War II-themed boat tour of New York Harbor through a new partnership with Classic Harbor Line, and the Making It In NYC: Inside Industry Tours, a monthly public tour series that visited workshops, studios, and factories in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Our team also completed a multi-faceted research report about sustainability and STEM education-related topics at the Brooklyn Navy Yard for the Brooklyn Historical Society and BLDG 92 to use to support future programming and training for K-12 students and teachers.

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 non-profit partners**

Turnstile Tours contributes at least 5% of all ticket sales to non-profit 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 Three

Turnstile Tours operated a total of **378 public and private group tours for 5,397 visitors** in 2014. 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, Moore Street Market and Brooklyn's "Avenue of Puerto Rico", and Manhattan street food. By the end of the year, Turnstile Tours achieved an overall five-star rating on both Yelp and TripAdvisor, we were awarded "Top Rated" status on the online booking platform Viator, and NYC & Company named Turnstile Tours as one of the Top 10 tour companies in New York City, calling us the company for the "thinking visitor" to NYC and highlighting our sustainability-focused tours at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

In 2014, we expanded our portfolio of tours at the Brooklyn Navy Yard by launching **Making It In NYC: Inside Industry Tours**, a monthly public tour series launched in conjunction with the Brooklyn Navy Yard Center at BLDG 92 that included a visit to the gallery of the temporary exhibition, *Making It In NYC: The Era of New Manufacturing*, followed by visits to featured workshops, studios, and factories inside the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Further deepening our knowledge and research about New York's World War II history, Turnstile Tours began offering **WWII-themed boat tours of New York Harbor** hosted in partnership with Classic Harbor Line. Offered six times throughout the year, including during Fleet Week, July 4th weekend, and Labor Day weekend, this program invited the public out to learn about the role of New York Harbor in supporting the war effort during World War II.

We also continued to make major **contributions to the historical record and scholarship** about the sites where we operate tours. We took on a student from the Columbia University Oral History Program, who conducted recorded interviews with people who had worked at the Brooklyn Army Terminal and related sites in southwest Brooklyn, including a World War II veteran of the US Navy Armed Guard, and two participants in a major art show that was held at the Brooklyn Army Terminal in 1983, *Terminal New York*. Our staff also conducted oral histories with visitors to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, including a former US Marine Corpsman station at the Yard in 1952, and the 50th reunion of the class of 1964 from the Pratt Institute-Brooklyn Navy Yard Co-op Program. We also lectured on our process of collecting and sharing oral histories on tours for graduate students in the Columbia University Oral History Program.

Finally, Turnstile Tours competed for and was awarded a major **consulting** project in 2014 for the Brooklyn Historical Society and the Brooklyn Navy Yard Center at BLDG 92 that resulted in a **comprehensive research report about the Brooklyn Navy Yard**, designed to support the development of and training for STEM-based K-12 programs at the 300-acre industrial park.

The report provided an in-depth examination of four major thematic areas that relate to the Brooklyn Navy Yard: **sustainable architecture and design, landscape architecture and urban agriculture, water and waterfront management**, and profiles of **technologies used by select companies at the facility**. Each theme explored how various concepts in science, technology, engineering, and math apply to real-world decisions that have an impact on the Brooklyn Navy Yard, the people who work there everyday, and the past and present of communities that surround the industrial facility. A team of five staff members of Turnstile Tours contributed knowledge and skills to this effort, thereby improving the overall knowledge level of our guides about STEM-related topics that we interpret on our own tour programs for the public.

But most importantly, 2014 was a big year for our many partners. The Brooklyn Navy Yard continues to grow and create more jobs for the local community, and BLDG 92 has unveiled a beautiful new exhibit. The Brooklyn Army Terminal is receiving fresh investment from the city government to expand and improve its facilities. The Street Vendor Project continues to build on major legislative victories in 2013, and the Moore Street Market is undergoing renovations and restructuring that will allow it to continue to serve the community of East Williamsburg and its tenant vendors. We are proud to help share the stories of these people and places in these exciting times.

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 April and May 2015, Turnstile Tours conducted our third annual survey of customers who had joined tours during 2014. The purpose of this annual survey is 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 non-profit partner, or just discussing the experience with a friend or family member.

In total, **103 respondents completed the survey**, and the breakdown was as follows: 52 attended Brooklyn Navy Yard Tours, 36 Brooklyn Army Terminal Tours, 12 Food Cart Tours, 6 Immigrant Foodways Tours, and 2 tours of other types (including Harbor Tours and custom private tours), for a total of 108 impressions, as some respondents attended multiple tours. Here are some of the highlights from the survey:

- Turnstile Tours continued to educate the public about our social mission and status as a New York State Benefit Corporation and participant in the B Corporation B Impact Assessment. While only 18% of respondents reported that before the tour, they knew Turnstile Tours was a Benefit Corporation, after the tour, 67% reported knowing, an increase of nearly 50 percentage points. This compares very favorably to those figures in 2013, which stood at 8% and 34%, respectively.
- **87% of respondents reported that after their tour, they spoke about the experience with a friend, family member, or colleague**, which is an improvement over 2013 figures (79%).
- When asked to rate their **level of satisfaction** with their experience on a scale from 5 (very satisfied) to 1 (not satisfied at all), **96% of respondents reported a 4 or 5, with an average rating of 4.77.**

- When asked to **select adjectives** or phrases that best described their experience, the most common were **“welcoming and engaging” (78%), “educational” (77%), and “tour ran smoothly” (73%).**
- **At the Brooklyn Navy Yard, we continued to increase public awareness about the contemporary story of the site,** with renewed focus on **development projects and sustainability initiatives.** We asked respondents to rate their level of familiarity with specific topics or aspects of the Brooklyn Navy Yard before and after the tour. Which visitors were somewhat familiar with the historical uses of the Yard before the tour (average score of 2.7), they were less so with current uses of the site (2.4), sustainability projects and initiatives (1.9), the current businesses inside the Yard (2.0), and the role of BLDG 92 (2.0). While historical awareness increased by a modest 1.6 points (to 4.3), all of the other responses jumped by at least 2 points.
- Similarly **at the Brooklyn Army Terminal, we saw significant jumps in awareness about the facility’s contemporary uses,** with jumps of at least 2.5 points on questions regarding redevelopment projects and current tenants. When asked about knowledge of the surrounding community, gains were more modest, moving from 3.0 to 3.8, indicating that this is something we can incorporate more into our tour, materials, customer follow-up, and other content.
- While this feedback was overwhelmingly positive, **we did receive some criticism,** both through this survey and other other channels, and we try to take that to heart as well. Some people complained that the Brooklyn Army Terminal Tour did not visit enough sites in the facility, and we worked with our partners to open up more areas to tours. Others had issues with discomfort with the weather, or that long periods of standing were uncomfortable. We work in some challenging urban environments, but we continue to work with our guides and partners to do the best we can to accommodate our visitors’ needs. Thankfully, 95.6% of respondents reported that their needs were “completely accommodated,” but there is always more work to be done.

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 and 2013, we decided to adopt the non-profit organization B Lab's B Impact Assessment, which we chose to use again in 2014. 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**, based on our 2013 assessment. 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 auditing again for our 2015 performance in order to maintain or 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 as 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 second annual benefit report**, which covered the company's first full year of operation (January 1 – December 31, 2013). The 2013 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 **103 customers participated in an anonymous survey** participated and provided feedback regarding the company's performance against its social mission and performance indicators. Turnstile Tours reviewed the survey results and identified areas of improvement, seeking to create training tools and workshops for staff in response to customer feedback.
- In 2013, Turnstile Tours launched a new photography tour series, complete with seasonal and year-end photo contests, at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in partnership with BLDG 92. In 2014, Turnstile Tours worked in conjunction with the Brooklyn Navy Yard Center at BLDG 92 to revise the release that photography tour participants sign in order to allow for printed materials, such as a calendar or postcards to be sold.

Areas of Improvement:

- Turnstile Tours stated in the 2013 Benefit Report that we would cultivate a Board of Directors in 2014 to provide oversight based on the company's overall performance and would begin meeting at least twice annually in the first quarter of 2014. Due to unforeseen challenges, this deadline was not met, and there are currently no external members of the board. However, at the time of this writing, we are examining this issue again as part of the process of becoming a New York City-registered Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE).
- Turnstile Tours investigated various options in 2014 for submitting oral histories and other primary source materials to public archives, but will devise a more long-term plan in 2015.

❖ Workers

This was a new section of the B Impact Assessment for 2014 that evaluated Turnstile Tours' worker compensation, benefits, and work environment. Some notable achievements included:

- By the end of 2014, Turnstile Tours had **six hourly employees and one working owner**, one additional employee from the five hourly employees in 2013.
- **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 did begin a **401(K) retirement plan** for our employees in January 2014.
- Based on the recommendation in our 2013 Benefit Report, we did manage to have more regular all-staff meetings, and almost every meeting has a built-in training component, and staff have the opportunity to suggest training topics, and can volunteer to develop and lead the sessions.

Areas of Improvement:

- In early 2014, we created an annual employee self-evaluation system, giving staff the opportunity to reflect on the previous year, set goals for the coming year, and offer feedback to management in an open, collaborative manner. We hope to continue and expand this evaluation process in the coming years.

❖ Community

The portion of the assessment looks at community engagement through charitable giving, volunteering, local economic development, and working with local suppliers. Our accomplishments in 2014 include:

- Our staff spent **more than 5% of their paid time in 2014 supporting non-profit organizations**. 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 again participated in the Vendy Awards planning committee, and Turnstile Tours produced a series of web videos about almost all of the participating vendors.
- **Turnstile Tours contributed 8.7% of all company revenues to non-profit organizations**. The largest recipients were the Brooklyn Navy Yard Center at BLDG 92, and the Street Vendor Project, and this is well above our stated goal of donating at least 5% of all revenues.
- Turnstile Tours continued to provide **support to our non-profit 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 speak passionately about their missions and programs.

Areas of Improvement:

- As we stated in our 2013 report in regards to our tour programming at the Brooklyn Army Terminal, we still have work to do to build our relationships with residents, businesses, and other institutions outside the walls of the sites where we lead tours, whether that be in Sunset Park or the neighborhoods surrounding the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

❖ 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 programming in 2014, with **13% 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. We also completed the STEM/Sustainability research survey of the Brooklyn Navy Yard in order to facilitate the development of this type of programming by BLDG 92 and the Brooklyn Historical Society, who launched their new "Seeing Green" Tour of the Yard for school groups this fall.
- 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.
- We continue to exclusively use **compostable bowls for serving food on our tours**.

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 continue to expand our portfolio of walking and bicycle tours and return to tracking the emissions impacts of our tours in future reports.
- We will look at ways to reduce the impacts of our use of disposable tableware for our food tours.

❖ 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 2014 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 non-profit 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 employs a Director of Sustainability Programming and looks 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 non-profit partner organizations, and we greatly exceeded this goal in 2014, contributing 8.7% of all company revenues.

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. In 2014, we began developing a long-range plan to bequeath original primary source materials in the appropriate public archives.
- **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. According to our most recent customer survey, 95% of respondents indicated that they were “completely accommodated” when asked whether “all of their needs were met – accessibility, mobility, dietary and otherwise.” 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 non-profit partners:** In addition to providing significant contributions of volunteer time and money to our non-profit partners, we also work to expand their mission and capacity, and reach a wider audience..

Areas of Improvement:

- In 2014, 24% of all tour participants came from educational or non-profit groups. This was short of our goal set last year of one-third, but showed a steady increase over 2013 (18%) and 2012 (12%).
- We plan to continue training our staff on accessible accommodations for all visitors and incorporate adaptive technologies, such as Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs), in the coming year.
- Complete plans and policies for long-term deposit of original primary source materials in the appropriate public archives.