



## Solutions for Our City

Helen Han, Chief Executive Officer,  
National Association of Women Business Owner-Los Angeles

Workforce development is a critical issue for small business owners. The Los Angeles Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO-LA), which represents the interests of more than 335,000 women owned firms in Los Angeles and Long Beach, strongly believes that the essential ingredient to sustainable economic growth is quality education – or more specifically, a quality workforce and educated consumers. As the fastest growing segment of the economy that employ more than 700,000 people and generate over \$113 billion in annual revenues in the region, women entrepreneurs understand that the most important business asset is its workforce. To ensure that Los Angeles is a better place twenty years from now, we must develop a strategy to provide quality education for future generations – thereby improving the quality of life and prosperity of all Angelenos.

The 21st century learner must acquire the high-level skills needed to thrive in the rapidly growing and changing business environment. This means that educational institutions, particularly public education, must completely rethink ways to educate their students to better prepare them for the competitive marketplace. They need an approach to education that emphasizes active learning that promotes critical thinking, decision making and problem solving... but most importantly, they need to teach students to apply their knowledge to the real world. Although we find such innovative learning opportunities in higher education, it is the missing link in the primary and secondary public education curriculum. We believe that we need to harness applied knowledge within the Los Angeles public school system.

The public school system is the optimal vehicle to change how applied learning is disseminated to young minds - given that it already has allocated resources and existing infrastructure. The Los Angeles Unified School District must reexamine ways to impart application-based education to our students to better equip them for the changing demands of the workplace. In order to achieve this objective, LAUSD must partner with both government and the business community to develop and deliver innovative solutions that are dynamic and effective. Los Angeles has been fighting an uphill battle after years of

lagging behind the rest of the country in terms of education and workforce development. Our City cannot compete in the global economy if we do not have an educated workforce that meets the ongoing demand of the marketplace. We believe that a drastic change in the way that education is delivered to our students is the best way to leverage our assets and prepare the next generation of Angelenos.

We propose that changing how education is delivered in Los Angeles can be possible – and even powerful - with a strong and sustaining partnership between LAUSD, local government and the business community. Local government must place application-based education and workforce development as their top priority and support such an initiative through policymaking and increased funding. The business community must provide educational solutions by offering internships and field study programs that will help develop a better prepared workforce – ultimately increasing their bottom line. LAUSD must embrace a culture of innovation and quality improvement that enables the business community to actively participate in setting educational goals and objectives.

For women business owners, the concept of ownership goes beyond self interest. Our success demands that we raise our voice and wield our influence beyond the walls of our individual businesses to take ownership of the shared responsibility of being stewards of a future beyond ourselves. We aspire to become part of the solution to create a better tomorrow for the next generation. As nurturers, employers and concerned citizens, we can actively participate in changing the delivery of public education by offering our businesses as the entrepreneurial training ground that will serve as the fertilizer to grow the next generation of leaders in Los Angeles.

We challenge the public school system, local government and the business community to work together to best leverage existing resources and infrastructure to deliver an application-based educational model that will serve as the catalyst to developing lifelong learners who will stand in the forefront of the knowledge revolution.