

# Chicago Green Business Conference: Innovative Business Models

## Sweet Beginnings: beeline®

A wholly-owned subsidiary of the

North Lawndale Employment Network



Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Navy Pier, 5:15pm, Room 325 - 326

## BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

➡ Sweet Beginnings is a social enterprise established to provide men and women, many of whom are re-entering the community from prison, with viable opportunities to establish a work history, learn productive work habits, and gain marketable skills as a stepping stone to further employment and career advancement

➡ Our core business is the production and sale of high quality, honey-based personal body care products and premium raw urban honey, all of which are marketed under the **beeline**® brand

Sweet Beginnings is a catalyst to Green pathways to prosperity



The Sweet Beginnings Program is an investment program created to provide opportunity to individuals and to the community

## SWEET BEGINNINGS PROGRAM VISION

*“supporting former offenders, driving community revitalization”*

### Social Mission

- Provide viable opportunities to gain marketable work experience and skills
- Hire 100 workers annually
- Introduce green principles and employment pathways



### Economic Mission

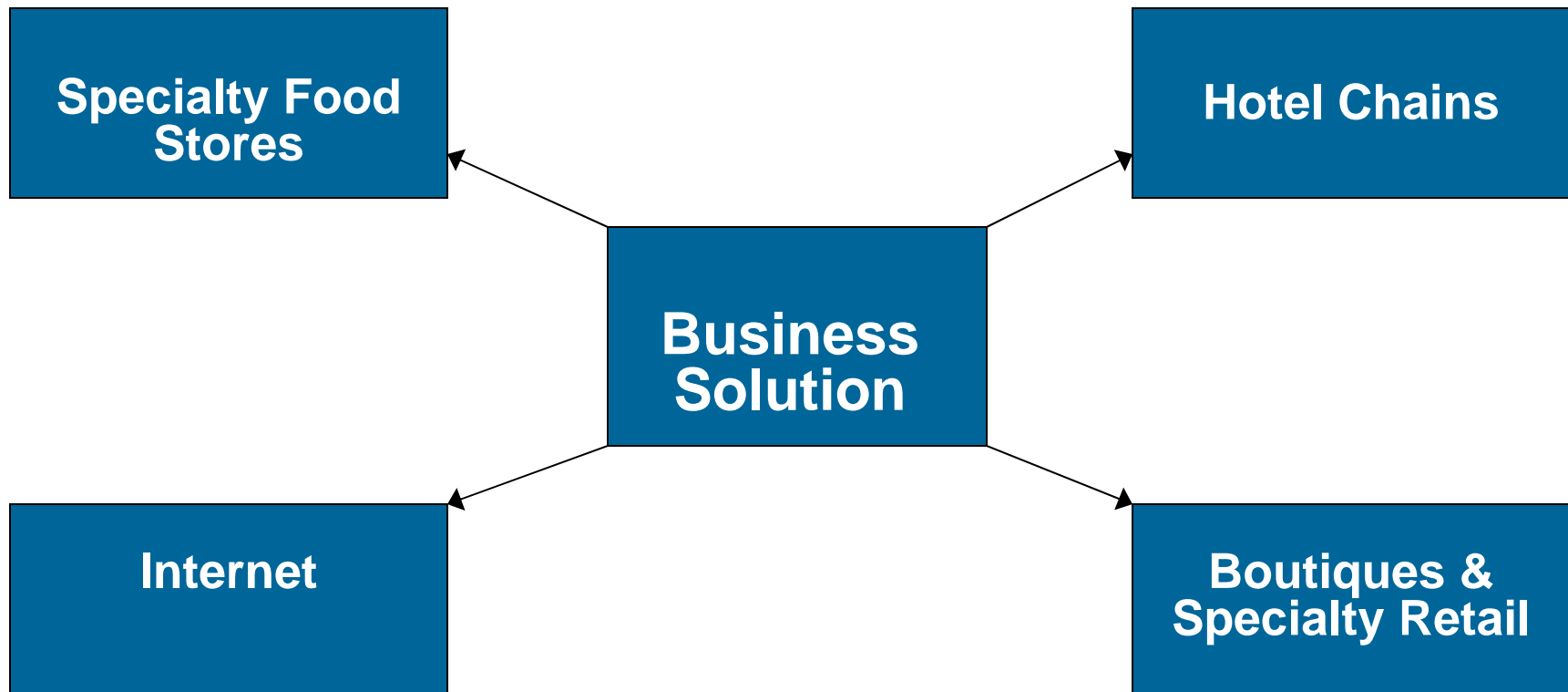
- Contribute to the economic revitalization of the North Lawndale community
- Our strategy positions Sweet Beginnings as a viable, sustainable, green, social purpose business

### Product Mission

- Manufacture and sell premium, high quality honey and honey-based products
- **beeline**® personal care products are made with natural, urban honey
- **beeline**® Gold, a 12-ounce jar of “estate” quality honey is made from our own limited honey production

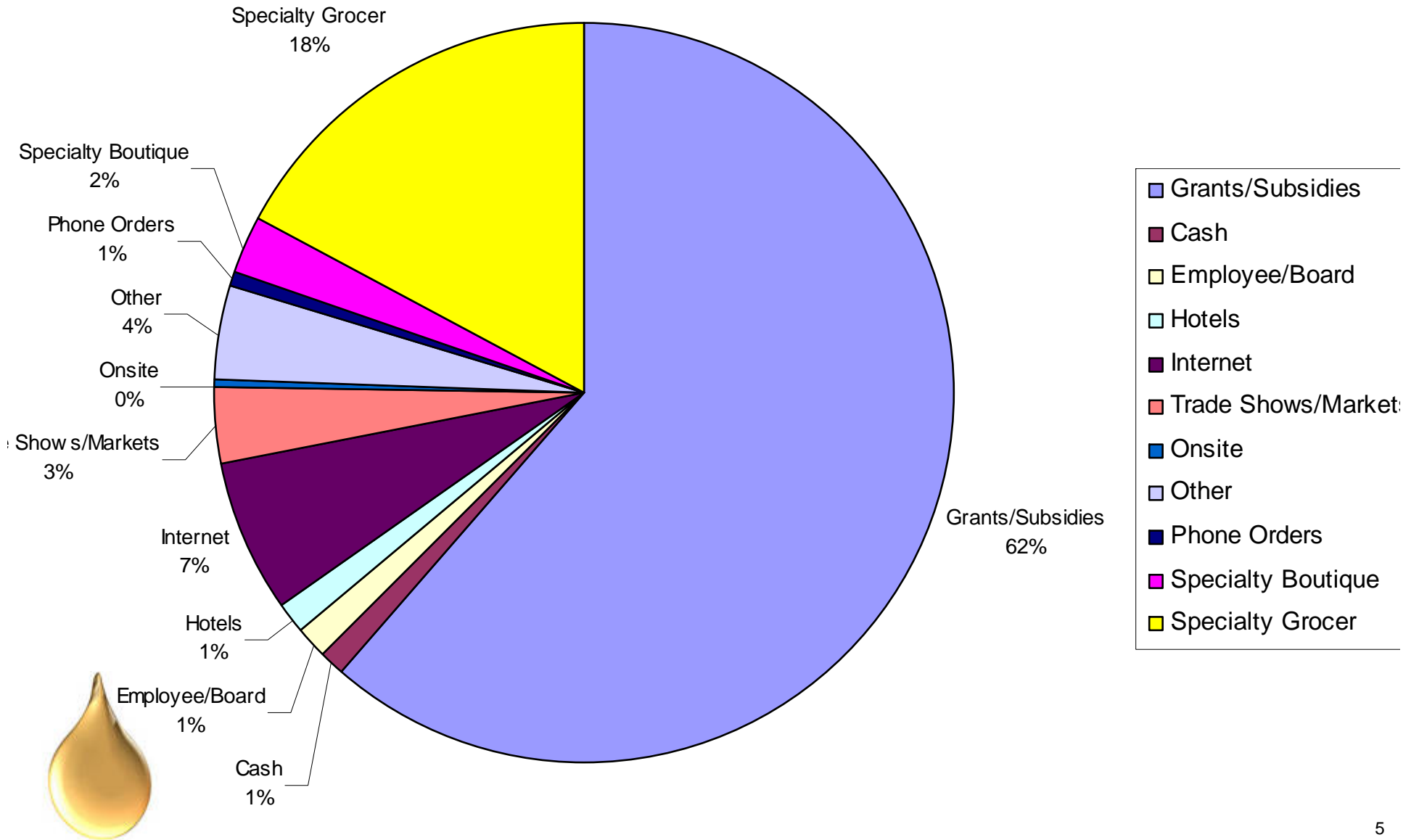
Sweet Beginnings competes in the mainstream marketplace; we are a business solution—not a charity! Our social mission distinguishes *beeline*® from its competitors

## CURRENT DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS



Sweet Beginnings Sales,  
Fiscal Year 2008

# Sweet Beginnings Sales, Fiscal Year 2008



Sweet Beginnings does not employ people to produce personal care products, rather it produces and sells products to employ people

## SWEET BEGINNINGS PERSONNEL MODEL

*“supporting former offenders, fostering sustainable livelihoods”*

### Valuable Training

- SB provides on-the-job training for 3 months
- NLEN uses training partnerships, e.g. UPS, Whole Foods
- NLEN provides SB workers with a personal employment coach

### Expanded Number of Positions

- 12 unique job categories have been created to implement our business strategy
- 10 categories are entry level with highly transferable marketable skills
- 100 positions will be filled annually

### Exit Strategies

- Transitioning to unsubsidized employment via NLEN
- Promoted within SB
- Referral to skill training or school
- Becoming an entrepreneur via one of several business support programs
- Termination



**At the one year mark, Sweet Beginnings had achieved 70% of its milestones; despite the great momentum there are challenges**

### **Sweet Challenges**

- **Start-up capital**
- **Finding talent to manage the business**

### **Great Momentum**

- **High local and national media attention**
- **Consistent high volume sales**
- **Talented employees**



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## CURRENT SWEET BEGINNINGS IMPACT

*“supporting former offenders, fostering sustainable livelihoods”*

### Social Mission

- 55 employees have participated in the SB program since January 2007
- SB has expanded from one team leader to four, all of whom were promoted from within the program
- 2 SB employees have returned to prison, a reentry rate of only 4%

### Economic Mission

- Sweet Beginnings is well on its way to becoming an independently sustainable business
- Since July 2007, Sweet Beginnings has generated over \$125,000 in revenues

### Product Mission

- SB has expanded from selling only honey to include seven personal body care products, as well as a variety of gift tins
- SB continues to expand into specialty grocers, and is looking to enter into the spa market



## Sweet Beginnings™ is transforming thoughts about the workplace

Sweet Beginning employees say:



- “During my time in training I learned how to control my emotions, the way I think, the way I act, the way to receive positive feedback, and most of all the way to take other people’s feelings and thoughts into consideration...Now I got the chance for my sweet beginning.” **Charmaine Lowe**
- “[We make it cause we all have the same goal, to see the show go on and to keep adding different personalities to our family. No matter how different you are you can make a difference in the world. And we do that everyday at Sweet Beginnings.]” **Don Campbell**
- “All my life I worked, but I wasn’t really into it. Always trying to make a fast buck. I see where it got me. I made a promise to myself and to the Lord to try to be around more positive people, to be around people who got something going for themselves, just doing it honestly. And that’s what I see over here at NLEN. For me, it’s just a start.” **James Burnett**

**NLEN understands the needs of the former offender and believes its social enterprise strategy is a unique and innovative solution**



***"The secret of success is to find the need and fill it, to find a hurt and heal it, to find somebody with a problem and offer to help solve the problem."***

**Rev. Robert H. Schuller**



# Contact Information

*“Bee sweet, Bee beautiful, Buy beeline®”*  
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