

## **Small Business Support**

### **Entrepreneurial Education**

TechTown continues to deliver free, expert resources to the public through flagship programs like Open Office Hours and Ask An Expert. Open Office Hours are available to both tech startups and neighborhood small businesses. During an Open Office Hour, a TechTown team member helps prioritize business goals and directs entrepreneurs to the appropriate programs, resources and experts in TechTown's Professional Services Network and the Detroit entrepreneurial ecosystem. Through the Ask an Expert program, members of TechTown's Professional Services Network provide free, expert consultations through a range of skills and specialties such as web development, HR, logistics/fulfillment and marketing. These resources have been highly utilized during COVID-19, with a combined 145 appointments held from October through December.

Additionally, TechTown has led the Technical Assistance efforts for the Detroit Means Business initiative, through coordinating 30+ ecosystem partners in curating and developing web-based content and providing daily expert one-on-one consultations to help small business owners navigate recalling employees to the workplace, welcoming back customers and safely operating in the era of COVID-19. From October through December, TechTown has facilitated 8 one-on-one expert consultations, leveraging the scheduling software and systems used to execute the Ask an Expert platform.

Finally, TechTown's Thursday Training Series has held 3 virtual workshops between October and December. The comprehensive, twelve-month professional development workshop series helps entrepreneurs build core business acumen and problem solve real-time business challenges in a moderated small group setting. From October to December 15th, the series has had 68 registrants and 13 attendees. This workshop series is targeted at approximately 400 low-to-moderate income TechTown alumni and Detroit, Highland Park, and Hamtramck small business owners -- a group that may not otherwise have access to these resources -- to help them sustain, grow or transition their business in response to COVID-19 with free subject matter expert-led virtual content, via one-on-one, peer-to-peer, and small group assistance.

### **Small Business Services**

#### Retail Services

The Retail Services team executed the 10<sup>th</sup> cohort (and first-ever virtual cohort) of Retail Bootcamp, TechTown's 10-week intensive program to prepare entrepreneurs to open a brick & mortar location in the city of Detroit within the next 6-12 months. 14 businesses successfully graduated from the program, with 3 having signed leases for spaces which will open March-September 2021 and 3 being accepted into a new retail collective space in New Center. New program curriculum focusing on crisis management and omni-channel retailing was added in response to the ever-changing retail landscape since COVID. The 11<sup>th</sup> cohort will run April-June 2021. In Q4, we celebrated the grand opening of Motor City Popcorn (2015 alum), who finally recognized his dream of opening in the city. Lush Yummies (2017 alum) was featured in Orpah's Favorite Things, while IERA Apothecary (2019 alum) was included in Google's #InTheBlack campaign.

The team continued to host The SHOP: Virtual Edition, offering TechTown program alums coaching on live selling best practices as well as a live online sales platform for reaching broader customer bases and making sales. 20 businesses were featured in Q4. Live selling has become a necessary part of every business's omni-channel approach, connecting their digital marketing to sales revenue.

### 313 STRONG

313 STRONG continues supports the sustainability of neighborhood, brick and mortar businesses in Detroit, Highland Park, and Hamtramck by providing customized, focused, business support, with an emphasis on capital, finances, operations, and marketing.

Since September, 313 STRONG has accumulated 102 client interactions and made 67 referrals to community partners and our Professional Services Network. In addition to 313 STRONG work, team members have conducted 23 Open Office Hours with potential and current business owners. Survey feedback provided by Open Office Hour participants indicates they have received significant value during these short interactions by providing a 9.66/10 Net Promotor Score.

This has been a challenging year for brick-and-mortar businesses, and while we aim to have no businesses closures, we are thankful that only one client has closed their business and this was not due to COVID-19. Small businesses are the life of a community and the critical work this team is doing is helping to keep doors open, revenue flowing, and workers employed.

### **Tech Programs**

During Q4 2020, the Tech team supported the Fall 2020 Start Studio cohort and concluded the inaugural TechTown Incubator program. We have maintained 100/100 Net Promoter Score (95/100 cumulative YTD) for our Open Office Hours, with excellent qualitative feedback. We have provided over \$100,000 in assistance year to date to companies through BAF SmartZone funding.

The inaugural TechTown Incubator program began on May 30 and concluded on November 12. This unique program is focused on helping more mature startups develop the systems and infrastructure required for growth. Participants also prepare themselves for funding. In addition to the business focused training, we provided personal development through ten weeks of group coaching. The participants were Clean Break (by Detroit Maid), HoopRun, Kaimon International, Mayfield Athletics, OmniHyve, and Hexient Solutions.

We are part of a team who was awarded a National Science Foundation EAGER Grant to develop fifty Black and African American women as tech founders. Our partners are the Julian C. Madison Building, LLC, Wayne State University STEM Innovation Learning Center, and the Midwest I-Corps. The applications for the program will close on December 1 and classes for the program, dubbed STEEP (STEM Entrepreneurial Excellence Program) Detroit, will begin in early February 2021.

### **Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program**

The Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program has adjusted to the "new temporary normal" during the months of September, October and November. The program resumed at Wayne State University along with the other national sites, the core activity of delivering the program to new cohorts, albeit

remotely. We resumed our outreach and recruiting efforts in preparation for our next cohort that is scheduled to start in January. We also continued to execute various alumni support activities. Below is a summary of our key activities that corresponded with this initiative.

- **Cohort 19 (September - December):** We launched cohort # 19 on September 14th, 2020. The program is being delivered remotely to 28 companies from Wayne, Oakland, Washtenaw, Livingston, Kalamazoo counties as well as northern Ohio. Cohort 19 is scheduled to end December 18th, 2020.
- **Outreach & Recruitment:** We continued our outreach and recruitment efforts in preparation for cohort #20. Given the new environment, we pivoted our outreach strategy. Our pivot included engaging with new and existing community partners as well as strengthening our relationships at the county level. We conducted various webinars attracting strong interest from the local business community. The new strategy yielded remarkable success as we received 196 completed part 1 applications; this represents a new record and well surpassed the goal of 120 part 1 applications.
- **Alumni Support:** The team has also been active organizing alumni support activities. At present, we are preparing for an hallmark virtual national strategic council where our alumni will participate in a live webinar whose guest list include: Warren Buffet, Mary Barra (CEO of General Motors), Michael Bloomberg and David Salomon (CEO of Goldman Sachs)

## Detroit Urban Solutions

Detroit Urban Solutions continued its work over the past two months to identify and apply for grant funding, build out the operational infrastructure and plan for the 2021 year. After officially launching the Detroit Urban Solutions Steering Committee, our website ([www.detroiturbansolutions.org](http://www.detroiturbansolutions.org)) and our first monthly internal newsletter, DUS turned its focus to the planning and execution of its initial “Civic Studio” Session focused on the “Future of Buildings” that was held on Dec 15<sup>th</sup>. Over 20 participants from the commercial real estate, energy efficiency, economic development, built environment and startup community attended this invite only 2-hour workshop to discuss the key barriers to technology implementation and integration, adoption of energy efficient technologies, gaps and challenges in the buildings and energy arena, market opportunities for workforce development and more. Key themes (workforce development, awareness/education and test beds/pilot demonstrations) and interest areas will drive the actionable next steps for DUS and the participants in early 2021. As we await responses to submitted proposals to Knight Foundation, [EDA SPRINT Challenge](#) and KLA + American Heart Association Social Impact Fund, Detroit Urban Solutions also re-engaged MEDC in funding conversations that may involve some working relationship with NewLAB. Additionally, Detroit Urban Solutions submitted a grant and pilot request to [US Ignite Facebook AR Challenge](#) in partnership with the City of Detroit Planning Department and [Schmidt Futures](#). The proposed pilot program will leverage augmented reality technology in order to engage community members and residents in the process of city planning and development projects. On November 18<sup>th</sup>, Paul Riser participated in a Global Entrepreneurship Week panel focused on the “Blue Economy and Entrepreneurship” after an invitation from Cleveland Water Alliance.

In a new funding opportunity, Erb Family Foundation requested that TechTown Detroit lead a regional effort to build a “Sustainable Business Network” intended to improve networking of professionals, entrepreneurs, business owners, corporate leaders, non-profits, academics and community members.

This “supra” network will work to accelerate regional progress, cooperation and communication for improved market efficiency and capitalizes on global trends in business sustainability. In early November, DUS was informed by Cleveland Water Alliance that Erie Hack 3.0 will be delivered in the Spring and Summer of 2021 and TechTown was subsequently invited by Erb Family Foundation to submit an LOI in early December and full proposal for support (due by Dec 23<sup>rd</sup>). Lastly, Paul Riser was invited by Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce and

### **Existing Programs**

**MedHealth**: Led by Stacey Frankovich as of February of 2020, MedHealth activity continues to accelerate and grow in a variety of areas with increasing interest from statewide, domestic and international healthcare organizations. In the months of November and December, MedHealth held its 3<sup>rd</sup> of 3 roundtables focused on healthcare systems “Evolving Business Model Adaption” in the wake of COVID-19 and our year-end Steering Committee meeting in mid-November. As a means of expanding the reach and impact of MedHealth after 5 years of activity, Fred Molnar of MEDC noted that he would welcome a proposal from MedHealth, and partners, to create a state-wide HUB. Building upon past conversations with aMDI (Applied Medical Device Institute in Grand Rapids), Xcelerate Health (Flint) and HealthSPARK (Traverse City), MedHealth plans to submit a proposal to MEDC Innovation and Entrepreneurship for financial support that will establish MedHealth as the state’s “gateway” for healthcare innovation and ecosystem resource navigation while positioning the state as a national leader. The funding will also instill a streamlined method of evaluating, assisting and tracking medtech programs in the state – for both Michigan based startups and out-of-state startups, health systems, investors, etc. seeking to do business here. MedHealth also sourced 8 healthcare startups from the Michigan entrepreneurial for the MedHealth and Henry Ford virtual “Pitch Day” on December 17<sup>th</sup>. The feedback has been exceptional and the Sr. Advisor to the CIO at Henry Ford Innovations stated: “...we conduct these pitch sessions monthly with incubators/accelerators from many regions (including international). I honestly think this was the best set of companies, top-to-bottom we’ve seen. Congrats to your team and the entrepreneurs.” Lastly, MedHealth continues to work with our Steering Committee members to finalize a refreshed three-year Strategic Plan that is targeted for a March 2021 completion.

**Motown Music Accelerator Program**: The Motown Accelerator Program continues to work closely with Rochelle Riley of the Mayor’s Office (bi-weekly standing meetings) to grow the program and we continue conversations for financial support with Buddy’s Pizza, Emagine Theater, Skillman Foundation, Quicken Loans, and others. In November and December of 2020, the program delivered two sessions, workshop #5 of the year titled “Recording at Home” on November 18<sup>th</sup> and workshop #6 titled “Streaming, Marketing and Money” on Saturday December 12<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, Motown Musician Accelerator Program has developed a revamped program that will expand offerings, reach and impact via a myriad of services that include quarterly workshops, open office hours (4 per year that average over 250 attendees each), master classes for the top 50 artists that apply (of the 400+ applicants per cohort) for the program, an additional 6-week curriculum is being added in 2021 for 10 artists and 10 managers to participate in addition to the cohorts of 4 top artists and managers that we delivered in 2020.

**Erie Hack**: As mentioned above, the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual **Erie Hack event** (Erie Hack 3.0) is being planned for a Q2 2020 kick-off. TechTown and WSU will serve as lead event partners and will drive all efforts in the SE Michigan / SW Ontario region. Planning with Cleveland Water Alliance for Erie Hack Q2 2021 just recently

restarted and a grant proposal request has been submitted to Erb Family Foundation for \$75,000 in funding.

## **Nonprofit Capacity-Building & Innovation**

### **Co.act Detroit**

**Background:** In December of 2017, TechTown Detroit was awarded a three-year grant from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation for \$4.75 million to launch the Center for Nonprofit Support at 6568 Woodward Avenue, just five blocks from the current TechTown building. Partners in the launch of the Center include the Michigan Nonprofit Association and Michigan Community Resources locally, as well as Community Wealth Partners nationally. Detroit's nonprofit community is both diverse and expansive, addressing the myriad needs and opportunities across southeast Michigan with relevant and impactful programming. However, many of these nonprofit organizations struggle to sustain themselves and fight a constant uphill battle to keep their doors open and invest in their staffs' long-term development. At the same time, countless opportunities for nonprofits in our region to collaborate, leverage efforts and deepen their impact go unrealized, either for lack of knowledge of one another's work or lack of capacity to solidify connections. Through the establishment of Co.act Detroit (formerly known as the Nonprofit Center for Support), the Foundation, TechTown and our community partners will meet these challenges of our nonprofit sector head-on.

**Brand Identity Development:** Co.act Detroit contracted with Earlyworks LLC, a Detroit based strategy and insights firm, to develop an integrated launch and rollout strategy, develop brand assets and a positioning approach to tell the organizational story and develop a comprehensive communications plan. Co.act Detroit is currently implementing the communications plan and continuing to increase awareness about Co.act Detroit programming through local and national media platforms. Co.act Detroit recently participated in the Plante Moran Executive to Executive video series. Co.act Detroit recently recorded 4 new episodes of our podcast Natural Collisions, which will be published in early 2021.

**Staffing:** The new Digital Communications Manager started on December 1, will implement our comprehensive communication plan, and continued efforts to increase awareness of our services. This new position will play a critical role in amplifying Co.act's digital presence and virtual programming.

**Programming:** Co.act Detroit has pivoted all of our programming into the virtual space due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our work to connect nonprofits to information and resources transcends the physical space and we continue to see an increase in the request for our services. Activate Fund grantees are currently implementing their projects and will complete grant requirements by March 31, 2021. Co.act Detroit continues to collaborate with other nonprofit intermediary organizations to provide COVID-19 relief. Since November, we have hosted webinars on the Payroll Protection Application, Understanding 990 Reporting, Nonprofit Design and Wellbeing. In partnership with the Urban Consulate, Co.act Detroit also hosted our final two conversation on Racial Equity, which featured local community leaders sharing their experiences and perspectives. We have hosted more than 150 appointments through our Co.Lab Connect program, which connects nonprofits with subject matter experts for one-on-one coaching. In January, we will launch our nonprofit accelerator, which will afford 6-8 nonprofits the opportunity to explore viable earned revenue streams for their organization. Co.act Detroit recently received a \$55,000 grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation to collaborate with

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the Indiana University School of Fundraising to host their Public Affairs Fundraising Certificate for nonprofit leaders in Southeast Michigan. Approximately 50 nonprofit leaders will have the opportunity learn practical tools for fundraising during a crisis.