

## **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. Beginning in January of 2021, experts from the Detroit Means Business platform joined TechTown's Ask an Expert, expanding the areas of expertise offered, specifically related to COVID-19 resources. These resources have been highly utilized during COVID-19, with a combined 113 appointments held from December 16<sup>th</sup> through February 5<sup>th</sup>.

Finally, TechTown's Training Series has held 2 virtual workshops between December 16<sup>th</sup> and February 5<sup>th</sup>. The comprehensive, twelve-month professional development workshop series helps entrepreneurs build core business acumen and problem solve real-time business challenges. While delivered in a live workshop format in 2020, the Training Series is now offered to entrepreneurs as digital library, allowing viewers to access content at a time that works best for them. Entrepreneurs are then invited to a live, peer-to-peer session, to seek additional insights, ask questions, and share business obstacles. From December 16<sup>th</sup> through February 5<sup>th</sup>, the series has had 42 registrants and 12 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 peer-to-peer and small group assistance.

### **TECH**

Thursday, February 4 marks the official first day of the STEEP (STEM Entrepreneurial Excellence Program). The NSF-funded program is a collaboration between the Julian C. Madison Building, Wayne State University STEM Innovation Learning Center, the Midwest I-Corps, and TechTown. The participants are fifty Black women founders building tech companies. The 15-week training led by TechTown kicks off a robust ten-month accelerator. Guest speakers and mentors include nationally recognized entrepreneurs and investors.

TechTown Start Studio Spring Cohort 2021 starts on Wednesday, February 17. We have moved through the recruiting and admissions process and are moving towards the first sessions. We anticipate a lively discussion with a diverse set of founders and startup ideas.

Our team is launching a new program called TechTown Traction in late Q1. The program will be primarily focused on peer-to-peer learning and accountability. The 30-week program will include tracking of sales and product development via an app that TechTown is developing internally. Participants entering their data in the app will create a leaderboard where they can track their growth relative to their peers. Clients will meet every two weeks to collaborate on sales and product development strategies.

Submitted by: Ned Staebler, Vice President for Economic Development

We are gearing up for the second cohort of TechTown Incubator. The operations-focused program for more advanced startups will begin in the middle of Q2.

The new TechTown Capital program is focused on providing knowledge about and access to capital. While we have been and will continue to be one of the most active BAF SmartZones in the state, we are creating a more formal program process to more effectively and equitably provide knowledge and access to capital. Our TechTown Capital program will launch in late Q2.

### **SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES**

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 45 client interactions and made 18 referrals to community partners and our Professional Services Network. In addition to 313 STRONG work, team members have conducted 12 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 10/10 Net Promotor Score.

In January, we coordinated with a bilingual member of PSN to provide a 90-minute virtual Troubleshooting Social Media workshop in Spanish. This workshop covered basic to complex social and digital media issues including how to claim your Google Business page, to what and how to post on social media sites. The workshop was very well attended with a 18 businesses represented including 13 clients and alumni.

Retail Services is engaged in logistical planning for the The 11<sup>th</sup> cohort (and second virtual cohort) of Retail BootCamp, which will run April-June 2021. We are working with the Systems and Marketing teams to create recruitment plan, set up info sessions and review the application and other processes. Meanwhile, we have completed intake assessments and created Milestone Action Plans to guide post-grad coaching engagements with the 14 graduates from the 2020 cohort. 2016 grad LeHost was featured in Black Enterprise for their success in securing product placement in over 300 Walmart locations. 2019 grad Crème Brulee celebrated their long-awaited groundbreaking in January for their Woodward Ave location. 2020 RBC alums SOL-3 Avenue and Sweet Thoughts were selected for participation in the UofM Detroit's Neighborhood Entrepreneur Project with a focus on identifying market opportunities. 2020 grad Inkourage received a grant to create the Path of Encouragement, a drive-through of encouraging words, as part of Grand Rapids' World of Winter event series.

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. Live selling has become a necessary part of every business's omni-channel approach, connecting their digital marketing to sales revenue. We are working with the Tech Team to determine how The SHOP: Virtual Edition format might benefit their client base.

## **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**

During this first month of 2021, Detroit Urban Solutions continues to remain diligent regarding identifying and seeking grant dollars from various sources. The team worked together to set the calendar of events for 2021 with respect to our quarterly Steering Committee meetings as well as four (4) Civic Studio Sessions throughout the year. Throughout the month, we engaged in conversations with Bruce Katz of The New Localism, formerly with Brookings Institute and consultant to the original “Detroit Innovation District” work conducted over 6 years ago here in Detroit. Bruce and Roberta Achtenberg, consultants to the new Bedrock CEO as well, are working with DUS to help shape, guide and deliver a co-developed, regional proposal for the Biden Administration from DUS partners. The proposal is intended to be aspirational, yet specific to the needs, opportunities, desired projects and outcomes for the Detroit region based on our priorities with intent of capturing federal resources allocated for Biden Administration “Relief and Recovery” efforts, funding and projects. On January 28<sup>th</sup>, Detroit Urban Solutions held our second Steering Committee Meeting and hosted Bruce Katz as our guest speaker to discuss the above-noted opportunities that also included communicating a sense of urgency around this unique time for Detroit. On the heels of our mid-December 2020 civic studio session focused on the “future of buildings” with CRE, financing, utilities and other participants from across the state, DUS has begun planning for follow-up to this engaging discussion which will produce tangible outcomes with

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community impact that can be delivered over the coming 90 days. Allie Lucas, our first DUS intern and grad student at Wayne State University Transformative Research in Urban Sustainability Program, comes to us via the Ford Community Corps program and officially started in January 2021.

In late 2020, DUS was also presented with an opportunity by Erb Family Foundation to develop and lead a regional Detroit Business Sustainability Network that will improve communications across the region relative to business sustainability, facilitate improved collaboration and connectivity (including academic institutions), deliver educational and informative events and building a deeper sense of “community” within the region. This TechTown / DUS led work will be funded via an initial President’s Discretionary Grant as well as a subsequent 2-year grant funded by Erb Family Foundation and include the support of 4 key partners (Wayne State, InForum of MI, Erb Institute at UofM and Southeast MI Sustainable Business Forum).

### **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. MedHealth is currently planning a March 2021 info session and virtual event focused on the mental health and wellness of healthcare workers with special guest/panelist Dr. Arash Javanbakht of Wayne State University. In response to the EDA CARES Act grant submitted in the Summer of 2020, MedHealth responded to a list of clarifying questions from the EDA. On January 12<sup>th</sup>, MedHealth held our first Steering Committee meeting of the year with a particular focus on refreshing our 3-year strategic plan. Stacey recently led the completion and submission of an application for two interns for 2021 (Early Spring via UofM School of Information Project Management and Consulting Course led by Amy Cell and Late Spring / Early Summer Duke Engage Virtual Intern). MedHealth continues to work with partners across the state to prepare a proposal to Fred Molnar that would afford MedHealth to take a statewide, leadership role in connecting the medtech ecosystem (i.e., startup support, communication, improving syndication of and follow-on investments, more collaboration and connection to healthcare systems and hospitals and more). Grant Rapids partner, aMDI, invited MedHealth to be a named partner in their LDFA proposal response that would name aMDI as the lead for their regional entrepreneurial efforts.

[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 (James Feagin), and others. Motown Musician Accelerator Program has developed a revamped program that will expand offerings, reach and impact via a myriad of services

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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. A press release for the announcement of the 2021 Motown Accelerator Program will be public in mid Feb 2021.

[Erie Hack](#): 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 recently renewed and a grant proposal request has been submitted to Erb Family Foundation for \$75,000 in funding for Erie Hack 3.0.

## **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 and Communications:** 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. This includes refining our digital communications strategy to increase audience engagement and outreach. Co.act Detroit recently participated in the Crain's Secrets of Best Managed Nonprofits webcast and was featured in Crain's Detroit and Model D. In February, Co.act Detroit launched a social media campaign to highlight African-American led nonprofit organizations in honor of Black history month.

**Staffing:** No updates at this time.

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**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. However, we are currently finalizing our plan for the safe use of the space in accordance with public health and safety considerations. Activate Fund grantees are currently implementing their projects. We have extended grant-reporting timelines to June 30, 2021 to ensure organizations have enough time to complete their projects. We recently on boarded Pacific Community Ventures, the external evaluator for the Activate Fund. We also hosted a grantee and service provider convening in January.

Co.act Detroit continues to collaborate with other nonprofit intermediary organizations to provide COVID-19 relief. Since December, we have provided technical assistance on new round of the Payroll Protection Application and forgiveness application. We also hosted workshops for organizations considering reorganization or dissolution. On January 11, we launched our nonprofit earned revenue accelerator application, which will afford 6-8 nonprofits the opportunity to explore viable earned revenue streams for their organization. We hosted two public information sessions and received 17 applications. Participants will be selected in late February and the program will begin in March. Co.act Detroit recently received \$100,000 grant from the McGregor Foundation to support the creation of a COVID-19 relief fund for Detroit based neighborhood organizations providing critical services to the community. Applications will launch in mid-February.

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