

## Small Business Support

### ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

TechTown continues to deliver free, expert resources to the public through flagship programs like Open Office Hours, Ask An Expert and the Tech Town Training Series. Open Office Hours are available to both tech startups and Detroit neighborhood-based businesses. During an Open Office Hour, a TechTown team member helps prioritize business goals and directs entrepreneurs to the appropriate programs and resources. The Ask An Expert program gives the public access to much needed guidance on laser focused topics. Experts are recruited from TechTown's Professional Services Network and from the Detroit entrepreneurial ecosystem. TechTown uses the knowledge and expertise from our ecosystem in a collaborative process to leverage the resources available for the businesses we serve. We conducted 119 Open Office hours and 55 Ask An Expert appointments from 2/5/21 through 3/29/21.

TechTown's Training Series has held two virtual workshops between February 5, 2021 through March 29, 2021. The Workshops covered two critical topics that affect the flow and interaction of any community-based business. In February, "Making technology work for your business" was an in-depth presentation on the back-office technology needs, like having the right POS system and dedicated internet connections. It also included money saving tips and techniques. In March, we presented "E Commerce- make it work for your business" where the presenter re-enforced the need to have the proper technology systems in place and emphasized the difference between website design and development. 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. We had 14 viewers and held two special workshops for Q and A with our experts in this time period.

We continue to work on improving the customer experience for the Training Series, having recently pivoted to an on-demand format. We are developing a series of YouTube info sessions that will cover hot button issues like access to affordable health care, human resources and access to capital. These sessions will serve as both public educational offerings and onramps to TechTown programming.

### SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

#### **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.

313 STRONG is currently supporting 26 businesses with several more in the pipeline. In addition to 313 STRONG work, team members have conducted 60 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 February, as part of a multi-week neighborhood outreach effort to increase Payment Protection Program applications from Detroit entrepreneurs, we co-hosted a PPP information session in English and

Spanish, as part of our commitment to Detroit Means Business. This information session included local lenders and resource providers who were eager to help small businesses. In total this outreach series served over 200 Detroit entrepreneurs.

### Retail Services

Retail Services has completed four information session to recruit and answer questions from potential applicants of Retail Boot Camp (RBC). Interviews for RBC were completed and 16 businesses were selected to participate in the the 11<sup>th</sup> cohort (and second virtual cohort) of Retail BootCamp, which will run April-June 2021.

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. The SHOP theme this month was Fierce Female Founders and featured CommodoTeas, Mama Coos, Ilera Apothecary and Busted Bra Shop.

Jeehan Nasir of Modestia Collection, RBC graduate, was referred by our team and accepted to University of Michigan Detroit's Neighborhood Entrepreneurs Project for winter term focused on marketing, identify target market and different sales opportunities.

On March 10<sup>th</sup>, Tina Arroyo of Spectacle Society, had her official grand opening, with Mayor Michael Duggan in attendance.

## **TECH PROGRAMS**

### New Programs

The STEEP (STEM Entrepreneurial Excellence Program) Program funded by the NSF 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 first group of 25 women is halfway through the 15-week training portion of the experience. We are recruiting the second group of 25 from now until April 12. We will have a celebration for the participants on May 20 at 5 pm.

TechTown Traction begins on March 30 and will include tracking of sales and product development via an app that TechTown has developed internally. Clients meet every two weeks to collaborate on sales and product development strategies.

Our new TechTown Capital program will launch in late Q2.

### Returning Programs

TechTown Start Studio Spring Cohort 2021 started on February 17 and will culminate in a Showcase on May 12. We are planning a special version of The SHOP, the Small Business Services' virtual pop-up program, that will feature all Tech clients on May 14. We are planning to run a special session of Start Studio in the fall that will be exclusively for Wayne State University students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

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.

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

The Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program continues normal operations (albeit remotely) in these anything but normal times. We successfully launched cohort #20 and are finalizing our recruitment efforts for cohort #21, which is also planned to be delivered remotely. In addition to keeping the program on track, we have implemented new initiatives to provide additional resources and support to our growing alumni base which now consists of over 600 business owners from the Detroit site and over 10,000 nationwide.

Cohort 20 (January - April): We launch cohort # 20 on January 11th, 2021. The program is being delivered remotely to 33 companies from Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties. Over a third the participants are from Macomb County; this is far above our average Macomb County participation levels. Cohort 20 is scheduled to end April 21st, 2021.

**Outreach & Recruitment:** We continued our outreach and recruitment efforts in preparation for cohort #21. Given the new environment, we continue refining our pivoted 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. This strategy continues to prove successful as we received 135 completed part 1 applications.

**Alumni Support:** With collaboration of the Goldman Sachs Foundation and Babson College, we have increased our alumni support programs. Starting in April 2021 we will launch a series of clinics that will serve refresher courses for our alumni who may need to re engage with the materials under this new business environment. These clinics, referred to as our “Back to the Classroom” series will be attended by approximately 100 of our local site alumni.

## **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. To date, Co.act Detroit has released 4 episodes of our Natural Collisions podcast to expand our digital communications strategy.

**Programming:** Co.act Detroit continues to offer all of our programming virtually 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. We are currently finalizing our plan for the safe use of the space in accordance with public health and safety considerations. Activate Fund grantees continue implementing their projects. We have extended grant-reporting timelines to June 30, 2021 to ensure organizations have enough time to complete their projects. Pacific Community Ventures, the external evaluator for the Activate Fund, has completed a draft theory of change with input from our Advisory Committee, grantees and service providers. In March, 6 organizations were selected to participate in our Earned Revenue Accelerator. The cohort sessions will begin on March 31 and culminate in June with a virtual pitch event.

Co.act Detroit continues to collaborate with other nonprofit intermediary organizations to provide COVID-19 relief. Co.act Detroit recently received a \$100,000 grant from the McGregor Fund and \$100,000 from the Hudson-Webber Foundation to support the creation of a COVID-19 relief fund for Detroit based neighborhood organizations providing critical services to the community. We received 85 grant applications for the program. Co.act has recruited a jury of nonprofit peers to review applications. Final selections will be made on April 8. Co.act Detroit also received a \$55,000 grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation to underwrite the cost of 2 cohorts of the Indiana University Fundraising in a Crisis certificate program. 50 nonprofit professionals from Southeast Michigan will have the opportunity to expand their fund development knowledge and skills at pivotal moment for the sector. Co.act Detroit is offering scholarships to ensure BIPOC leaders and smaller organizations can access the program.

## Talent-based Economic Development

### Detroit Revitalization Fellows, a program of Wayne State University

Launched at Wayne State University in 2011, the Detroit Revitalization Fellows (DRF) program has placed talented, mid-career professionals at local organizations at the forefront of the city and region's civic, community, and economic development. This select group of doers engaged in a rigorous two-year leadership development program while serving full-time at their host organizations. DRF has been generously funded by the Kresge Foundation, Ford Foundation, Hudson-Webber Foundation, Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, Skillman Foundation, DTE Energy Foundation, the Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the PwC Charitable Foundation, Rock Ventures, and Wayne State University.

Acknowledging the changes occurring across the city since 2011, in April 2019 the program embarked on a strategic assessment. DRF partnered with The Work Department and Public Sector Consultants to engage nearly 100 diverse stakeholders including current and alumni Fellows, funders, Advisory Council members, current and previous employers, coaches, other sector leaders, and residents via phone

interviews, surveys, focus groups, and strategic planning sessions. The goal was to understand and develop a vision for how the fellowship could make a greater impact while continuing to nurture and promote the leaders Detroit needs now. The assessment is complete and the executive summary and five-year strategic plan will be publicly shared when appropriate.

In May, DRF staff along with OED leadership made a significant strategic shift in line with prospective funding priorities to solely support increased alumni programming. In August of 2020, DRF successfully obtained respective funding for the remainder of the 2020 year. While the nation grapples with navigating both a health and social pandemic, DRF will execute programming that supports its network of 80 Alumni fellows during these times via virtual means. DRF will continue to pursue ongoing funding to support 2021 Alumni programming.

#### **Alumni Engagement:**

To honor the implications posed by COVID 19, the DRF program began hosting a series of virtual Alumni check-ins in late May. Since then, Alumni fellows from all four cohorts have had the opportunity to connect with each other on a weekly basis. Fellows have been enjoying and taking advantage of the flexibility that surrounds these meaningful check-ins and have found the opportunity to connect to one other and discuss topics of their choosing, share much needed resources and simply embrace their network to be essential in facilitating community building which has been especially valuable during this time of the COVID19 pandemic and social unrest across the nation.

Based on data taken from an Alumni COVID-19 survey conducted in May of 2020 along with feedback from DRF's Alumni council, a more formal four-month Alumni Engagement curriculum was developed to further support the leadership/professional development journeys of the Alumni network.

In September 2020, Alumni Fellows engaged in their first virtual Professional Development workshop entitled "Courage to Connect" facilitated by digital wellness expert, Mark Ostach. The "Courage to Connect" workshop was attended by fellows from all four cohorts and provided the space for fellows to check-in and reconnect with the DRF Alumni community while gaining skills that support managing digital wellness during the age of COVID-19, combating zoom fatigue and effectively managing/communicating with virtual teams. The "Courage to Connect" workshop also provided Alumni fellows various resources and tools to help them re-engage/engage their networks courageously during this time of extreme uncertainty and instability.

In October 2020, Alumni Fellows engaged in their first virtual Leadership Development workshop on "Adaptive Leadership" facilitated by Jeff Lawrence. Once again, fellows from all four cohorts attended this meaningful workshop which provides a practical leadership framework that helps individuals and organizations adapt and thrive in challenging environments. October's "Adaptive Leadership" training was the first of several workshops that will make up the Alumni "Adaptive Leadership" series which will focus on helping fellows build the skills, insight and will to lead, understand, live and thrive through change and in dynamic, even turbulent times.

In November 2020, Alumni Fellows gathered for a virtual Dinner for 30 event facilitated by event Founder Cornetta Lane and attended by over 20 Alumni Fellows across all four cohorts. Dinner for 30 is a live storytelling and cooking event - Cohort I Fellow, Jela Elefson, served as the featured Alumni storyteller where she shared her personal leadership story and illustrated how to cook two dishes related to her personal leadership experiences. Jela Ellefson is a community and real estate development professional

with a background in urban planning, design, and placemaking. Over the past 20 years Jela has worked on a variety of urban challenges across the U.S.

Fellows convened in late February 2021 to engage in the last workshop of the current “Adaptive Leadership” series – the February 2021 “Adaptive Leadership” session served as a continuation of the sessions that were hosted in October 2020 and culminated the first Adaptive Leadership workshop series for the 2020 – 2021 Alumni programming curriculum.

As of March 2021, Alumni fellows are planning, at the direction of fellowship staff and the Alumni Council, to engage in the first virtual Alumni gathering of 2021 – the virtual gathering will include an Alumni Town Hall and other Alumni focused activities to generate awareness of and set expectations for the 2021 Alumni Virtual programming calendar.

As we all continue to navigate the implications posed by both the global and national pandemic, DRF staff will maintain a nimble programming curriculum that optimally meets the Alumni network’s ongoing leadership/professional development needs.

Ongoing collaboration/receptiveness towards the Alumni programming curriculum will be achieved through the partnership and ambassadorship of the Alumni Council which was convened virtually in April, July, September and November of 2020. The Alumni Council convene for its first meeting of 2021 programming year in March 2021.

**Funding:** The fellowship submitted a \$150k Alumni grant proposal to the Wilson Foundation and was successfully awarded respective funding, fully supporting the program’s 2020 Alumni programming budget. Given implications on programming and scheduling posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, DRF requested a respective budget extension from the Wilson Foundation and was successfully awarded that extension until April, 1 2021 to further support program operations in early 2021. DRF staff, WSU Foundation Relations, and OED’s development team have submitted concept plans to the Ford Foundation with the hope of receiving a formal invitation to submit a proposal for a May 2021 award. DRF and its fundraising team are also working to engage the Ballmer Foundation, the Kresge Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation, of which it has had a preliminary conversation, to secure complete funding for the 2021 - 2022 program budget.

**Partnerships:** In 2020, DRF convened five local talent/leadership development programs/organizations to explore possible connections across our work. The group convened virtually each month from March throughout July and again in November 2020 and has served useful in thinking through the shifts talent/leadership programs/organizations need to consider as we all work to navigate the impacts of COVID-19 on our organizations and program participants. The group reconvened in February 2021 for its first meeting of 2021 and will continue to convene quarterly throughout the year.

**Raising DRF’s Profile:** The Detroit Revitalization Fellows is now regarded as the longest-standing mid-career urban fellowship program in the country. The staff is regularly looked to for guidance from other organizations that are considering launching their own fellowship programs, and to share its expertise. Fellows are consistently being recognized for their contributions to the future of Detroit and the region, and being given increasingly influential professional opportunities. Recent examples include:

Under the leadership of Cohort II Fellow, Allandra Bulger, Co.act Detroit has launched its initial cohort of nonprofits for the organization’s Earned Revenue Accelerator program in March 2021. Leaders from

Artlab J, Concrete Oasis, Detroit Hives, Journi, Mack Avenue Community Church Development and the Ruth Ellis Center, all Wayne County nonprofits, will engage in the pilot program posed to support the leaders and their organizations in increasing existing earned revenue.

Cohort IV Fellow, Alaina Jackson accepted a role as part of the economic mobility team with Ford Mobility in March of 2021 and DRF's Program Manager, Latina Black, attended City Lab 2021 in March – a second invitation from the Aspen Institute and Bloomberg Philanthropies to represent Detroit as one of eight invitees from our region to attend the leading global summit for mayors, city leaders and innovators, cross-sector urban thinkers and social activists, experts, entrepreneurs and artists to connect with each other and to create and share scalable solutions for cities' most pressing challenges.

## Place-Based Economic Development

### Placemaking

OED are in the process of hiring a Placemaking Ambassador (a 20 hour/week Student Assistant) to help execute our 2021 placemaking initiatives, including: placing flexible seating outside the Undergraduate Library and in Woodward | Warren Park; coordinating an inspirational art installation in Woodward | Warren Park during Detroit Month of Design (September); and adding a mid-block artistic crosswalk connecting TechTown and WSU's Industry Innovation Center. Additionally, we will continue to engage our placemaking community through our PlaceMakers email listserv and Instagram page. Our Instagram following increased 400% in 2020.

### Mobility

WSU began offering enrolled students free 31-Day Dart Passes via The W Food Pantry in November 2019. The passes are activated upon 1<sup>st</sup> use and good for unlimited rides on DDOT and SMART buses, as well as the QLINE. We distributed 1,200 passes between Nov. 2019 and March 2020 when DDOT and SMART went fare free and the QLINE paused operations in response to the pandemic. DDOT and SMART started charging riders again – and The W resumed distributing free passes to students – in March 2021. The QLINE will resume operations this summer. OED is working with all three providers and MoGo on a plan to give WSU students and employees free access to these systems long-term.

### 10 Year Anniversary

**Strategic Planning:** OED drafted a university-wide Economic Engagement Strategy for WSU in 2018-19. Given the impacts Covid-19 has had and continues to have on our communities, we are revisiting this work in 2021. We are currently having one-on-one conversations with strategic internal and external stakeholders – including WSU Government and Community Affairs, the Detroit Regional Chamber and APLU – and researching best practices for equitable economic development. We anticipate having an updated strategic direction and set of high-level goals in fall 2021, which we hope will serve as a model for how universities – including our APLU-IEP peers – can help their communities thrive post-pandemic.

**Communications Campaign:** OED is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. We are celebrating with a communications campaign highlighting University and OED accomplishments. Our campaign officially launched with WSU Giving Day on April 8<sup>th</sup>. We will focus on our accomplishments in spring and summer

and reveal our plans for the future – including our updated Economic Engagement Strategy – in the fall. Anticipated campaign assets include national and local news stories, social media infographics and a video featuring University leadership, students and staff and program beneficiaries. Through this work we hope to increase our visibility, fundraise and, ultimately, be more impactful in our work.

## TechTown Operations

### Coworking/Office Space

Building occupancy is approximately 76%, with 3 large offices and 6 small offices available for leasing. We are continuing to evaluate member and tenant needs along with other internal variables (including staff capacity and adherence to building safety protocols) and external variables (including city/county/state case rates and vaccination pace and take rate) that inform decisions about expanded building access and offerings.

Since reopening in June 2020, we have had a total of four reports of positive Covid tests (meaning someone who used our space within the previous two weeks alerted us after testing positive for Covid as part of our contact tracing process). In each instance, we followed standard protocols for addressing potentially affected areas and individuals. TechTown remains a very safe work environment.

### Coworking Classroom

With many students returning to in-person learning at school facilities, TechTown's Coworking Classroom program is winding down in recognition of shifting needs. Members, tenants and guests are turning their attention to what the future of work will require in terms of safe meeting space, and we are continuing to thoughtfully evolve to meet those priorities. The space previously used for Coworking Classroom will be repurposed to provide expanded individual work areas and larger meeting space (for reference, the pre-pandemic capacity of the space was 180, compared to the current capacity of 20 (to allow for sufficient social distancing)). Coworking Classroom was an important resource for those who participated, as evidenced by some of the testimonials we received, including:

*"I can get so much more work done when someone else is supervising their virtual schoolwork, while knowing they are safely just down the hall!"*

--Megan Owens, TechTown Coworking Member

*"It was an honor to help execute such a needed program during a time of uncertainty and to see the positive impact it had on these students' academic careers."*

-- Victoria Guido, Coworking Classroom Facilitator

## Staff Changes

TechTown continues to be an organization known for providing its staff with significant opportunity to grow and contribute in meaningful ways. This investment in our people and commitment to providing them with opportunities to work closely with community partners sometimes results in staff being recruited to positions with other organizations. We recently celebrated next steps for multiple colleagues. Current openings include:

- Collaborative Workspace Director
- Systems Innovation Director
- Finance Director
- Community Ambassador
- Small Business Strategist

## **Strategic Plan Progress**

TechTown started 2021 with 9 org-wide strategic goals organized into four categories: Our People, Our Purpose, Our Process, and Our Product. These goals and categories were developed with input from the entire staff – from assistants to executives. As we near the end of Q1, we can report notable progress toward 8 of the 9 goals and have recently launched a weekly all-staff touch point intended to keep the goals – and our work toward them – top of mind for everyone.