

Small Business Support

Entrepreneurial Education

TechTown continues to deliver free, expert resources to the public through its signature programs: Open Office Hours, Ask An Expert and TechTown Training Series.

Open Office Hours

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 based on the entrepreneurs needs. TechTown uses the knowledge and expertise from our ecosystem in a collaborative process to leverage the resources available for the businesses we serve. We had 60 Open Office Hour appointments from March 29, 2021 to April 30 2021. Out of the 60 appointments, 3 of the businesses coached identified themselves in expansion, 10 in growth, 22 launched and transactional and 25 in the idea phase.

Ask An Expert

The Ask An expert program provides our business community access to much needed guidance on laser focused topics. Experts are recruited from TechTown's Professional Services Network and from the Detroit entrepreneurial ecosystem. During the period of March 29, 2021 and April 30, 2021 we held 33 appointments. The most frequent inquiries from clients were focused on Funding, (30%); Marketing (24%); Team Building (18%).

Tech Town Training Series

We continue to work on improving the customer experience for our on-demand professional development workshop series which is designed to help entrepreneurs build core business acumen and problem solve real-time business challenges.

TechTown's Training Series has held one virtual workshop between March 29, 2021 through April 30, 2021, titled : Creating The In-Store Experience: The Power of Visual Merchandising & Store Design Presented by Professional Services Network member Amanda Rose, of ARC Design Studios.

This course covered the power of a properly designed layout and visual merchandising practice to influence both customer experience and the business owners' profitability.

The presenter participated in a one hour question and answer session with entrepreneurs who viewed the presentation and received in depth answers to specific questions. Additionally, the Training series had 40 viewers during from March 29, 2021 and April 30, 2021 and achieved a Net Promoter Score of 8 during the period.

TECH PROGRAMS

New Programs: STEEP, Traction, Capital

The STEEP (STEM Entrepreneurial Excellence Program) Program funded by the NSF is a groundbreaking initiative supporting fifty Black women founders building tech companies. The first group of 26 women were recruited, and 22 women have completed their 15-week training portion of the experience. We will celebrate this milestone with a public-facing virtual event on May 20, 2021 at 5:00 pm.

All STEEP participants will continue to be supported with coaching, inspiring speakers, and continued access to a no-code platform that enables them to create their early prototypes. Participants will be connected with other TechTown programming, or with partners, depending on whether they are focused on honing their unique value propositions, growing sales, shoring up their operations to scale, or pursuing venture capital funding. The second STEEP group has been recruited. Their training will begin on June 3, 2021 and last through September 9.

TechTown Traction has begun with five invited pilot participants. Participants focus on sales growth and product development via an app that TechTown has developed internally. They meet every two weeks to collaborate on sales and product development strategies. More clients will be added in June as the Spring Start Studio and STEEP cohorts wind down.

The BAF track of the TechTown Capital program will launch on May 18, 2021. It is an enhanced process for accessing the Business Accelerator Funding that TechTown can provide as a Michigan SmartZone. We anticipate that the TechTown Startup Fund initiative to provide capital for Black tech founders launched in late April and running through late May will give our clients another great option for equitable capital that can be accessed through the program.

Returning Programs: Start Studio, Incubator

The TechTown Start Studio Spring Cohort 2021 Showcase was held on May 12. The program focuses on helping people vet their ideas with intensive customer discovery. Ten of the 14 participants who started the program made it through the process with a “go” decision for their ideas based on the data. 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 June 2021.

Finally, a special version of The SHOP, the Small Business Services’ virtual pop-up program, that will feature all Tech clients was held on Friday, May 14 at 4 pm. Special guest Trevor Nelson of Rock Community Foundation will join Tech Program Manager Phaedra Wainaina as they host four early-stage startups.

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 over 50 Open Office Hours with potential and current business owners from March to May, 2021. 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.

Retail Services

Retail Services has begun the eleventh cohort of Retail Boot Camp, which will run April-June 2021. There are sixteen businesses enrolled. Each week the cohort has the opportunity to hear from industry leaders and members of TechTown's Professional Services Network on topics such as Branding from Featherstone Moments, Retail Math from Kristin Edwards and Marketing from Blended Collective.

Retail Strategist Christina Devlin presented on resources available to startup entrepreneurs at Wayne State University Entrepreneurship in the Arts course, instructed by Elizabeth Barton on April 4th, 2021.

The team continued to host The SHOP: Virtual Edition, offering TechTown program alumni 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 in celebration of Arab American Heritage Month and featured the following businesses: Wonder Falafel, Detroit 75 Kitchen, Modestia Collection and Socotra Island Soaps.

Jeehan Nasir, owner of Modestia Collection, is a Fall 2020 Retail Boot Camp alumna, who is participating in TechTown's The Shop for the month of April. Jeehan joined the Training Series live, Q+A focused on Visual Merchandising and led by Amanda Curtis of ARC Design Studios. Jeehan utilized this group session to ask questions related to her virtual pop-up display and how she could best showcase her head wrap.

Additionally, Managing Director of Entrepreneurial Programs and Services, Amy Rencher, coached a Wayne State University Entrepreneurship business plan pitch competition, instructed by Nicole Mangis on April 20th, 2021.

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 #21 and are approaching the part 1 application for cohort #22, which is also planned to be delivered remotely. In addition to keeping the program on track, we are completing a new initiative to provide additional resources and support to our growing alumni base which consists of over 600 business owners from the Detroit site and over 10,000 nationwide.

- **Cohort 21 (May - August):** We launch cohort # 21 on May 10th, 2021. The program is being delivered remotely to 25 companies from Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties. Cohort 21 is scheduled to end August 18th, 2021.
- **Outreach & Recruitment:** We continued our outreach and recruitment efforts in preparation for cohort #22. 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.
- **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. We have completed 3 out of 4 modules of

this clinic series, referred to as our “Back to the Classroom” and are scheduled to complete module 4 in mid June 2021

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 for strategic communications support. 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. ThCo.act Detroit continues to grow our online engagement and audience. We will relaunch our podcast series in June 2021 to align with our evolving program 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 designing a participatory design strategy with our nonprofit community to inform the safe use of the space in accordance with public health and safety considerations. We will release a survey in June, followed by focus groups to better understand the evolving space needs of nonprofits. 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. In March, 6 Wayne County based organizations were selected to participate in our Earned Revenue Accelerator. The 6 week curriculum will culminate with a virtual pitch event on June 9, 2021.

Co.act Detroit continues to collaborate with other nonprofit intermediary organizations to provide COVID-19 relief. Co.act Detroit recently received an additional \$100,000 grant from the McGregor Fund to support the creation of a COVID-19 relief fund for Detroit based neighborhood organizations providing critical services to the community. Fifty-eight organizations have been selected to receive grants up to \$5000. 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. There has been a strong interest in the program as fundraising remains a top need for many nonprofits. The second cohort will kick off on 5/20. Co.act Detroit has been invited to submit a proposal to the Kresge Foundation to serve as the intermediary partner for the KIP:D program, which supports transformative projects that tap into the vision and creativity of Detroiters to improve the quality of life

in their neighborhoods.

Place-Based Economic Development

Placemaking

OED hired 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.

Mobility

Beginning in 2014, OED partnered with DDOT to offer all on-campus residents a free Monthly DDOT Pass upon move-in. In 2018-19, based on feedback from the Student Senate and annual program surveys, We expanded the program to include SMART and made Monthly Regional Bus Passes available to all students via Housing, DOSO, The W Food Pantry and The High Program in both October 2018 and February 2019. This proved popular with students and in 2019-20, we further expanded the program, making free 31-Day Dart Passes—good on DDOT and SMART buses, as well as the QLINE streetcar—available year-round via The W Food Pantry.

2014-2017	2018-19	2019-20
DDOT	DDOT and SMART	DDOT, SMART and QLINE
3,000 September Passes	1,000 October & February Passes	3,000 31-Day Passes (250/Month)
On-Campus Residents	All Students	All Students
Distributed by Housing	Distributed by DOSO and The W	Distributed by The W
Funded by DDOT	Funded by DDOT and SMART	Funded by Wayne State*

*The 2019-20 program is generously funded by Provost Whitfield.

As we look ahead to Fall 2021, when we anticipate welcoming students back to campus, OED is seeking a \$1.00 increase in the Student Service Fee (currently \$37.82 per credit hour for undergraduates, \$54.56 for graduate students and \$27.00 for MD students) in order to provide all students and employees with free access to DDOT, SMART, the QLINE streetcar and MoGo (bike share). We are currently working with all four (4) providers to determine the specifics. Nearly 140 other colleges and universities already offer some kind of "U-Pass", including both Michigan and Michigan State. Wayne State would be the 1st university and large employer to partner with Dart providers.

10 Year Anniversary

Strategic Planning: OED drafted a university-wide Economic Engagement Strategy for Wayne State in 2018-19. Given the impacts Covid-19 has had and continues to have on our communities, we are revisiting this work in 2021 with the goal of creating an "economic impact" section of Wayne State's forthcoming 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. 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

hope our work 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 10th 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 8th. We are currently focused on highlighting our—Wayne State and OED— accomplishments via social, campus and external media and hope to begin sharing our plans for the future in Fall 2021. 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.

Operations

Coworking/Office Space

TechTown's reputation as an inclusive, affordable and safe facility continues to drive interest in our coworking memberships and private office leasing. In the past two months, building occupancy increased by 5 percent (current occupancy: 81%), and three new lease agreements will be finalized by the end of this month. While the Collaborative Workspace Team is working hard to grow our community of members and tenants, they are also continuing to prioritize our existing building users through a variety of engagement efforts – including a member/tenant town hall in March (to provide updates about our offerings and invite people to share feedback and ask questions) and an upcoming appreciation campaign during the month of June (to thank those who remained committed to our space throughout the pandemic).

As TechTown's frontline workers (and the only staff reporting in-person during the past year), the Collaborative Workspace Team and the Facilities Team have not only kept the building operational – they have thoughtfully and effectively supported our community of building users while minimizing negative impact to building revenue. Both teams are currently developing new building protocols in response to an increase in Covid vaccination rates, and while we do not plan to relax our safety guidelines as rapidly as the Centers for Disease Control and the State of Michigan did recently, we are confident that our approach will strike a balance between preserving the safety of our space and supporting the needs of our members and tenants.

New Human Resources Department + Culture Audit

In 2018, TechTown engaged a third party to conduct a culture audit, and the recommendations from that process drove important improvements in the organization in 2019 and 2020. One key action item identified as a goal in 2020 was the addition of an HR Director. This position was filled in April 2021 and is supported by a full-time coordinator.

As a follow-up to the 2018 culture audit, we conducted an all-staff culture survey in April 2021 and are now in the process of using the results to inform culture-related goal setting and action steps for all three entities (TechTown, Co.act Detroit, and the WSU Office of Economic Development). The survey included 62 items focused on the following categories:

- Collective Leadership
- Culture + Staff Communications
- Your Role Within This Organization

- Your Relationship with Your Immediate Supervisor
- Training, Development, Time + Resources
- Overall Employee Experience

Nearly half of the items scored positive responses in the 80% and 90% ranges. Some examples:

- In areas that impacted staff, this organization responded well to the pandemic – 88% agree or strongly agree
- The leaders of this organization are open to input from employees – 88% agree or strongly agree
- Leadership maintains a diversity-friendly work environment – 90% agree or strongly agree
- I like the type of work that I do – 90% agree or strongly agree
- My job provides me with a sense of meaning and purpose – 90% agree or strongly agree
- The leaders of this organization care about their employees' well-being – 93% agree or strongly agree
- My supervisor treats me fairly – 93% agree or strongly agree
- This organization encourages me to develop professionally and/or acquire new skills – 93% agree or strongly agree
- I am proud to work for this organization – 93% agree or strongly agree
- My supervisor is open to hearing my opinion or feedback – 95% agree or strongly agree
- I feel I can trust what my supervisor tells me – 95% agree or strongly agree

Data + Systems

The creation of the Systems Innovation Team in 2020 was the first step in positioning TechTown to become a leader in equitable data collection and analysis. After migrating TechTown's data into a sophisticated customer relationship management (CRM) platform, the team led projects focused on improving and streamlining internal systems through formal evaluation and data analysis. In addition to their individual work assignments, the System Administrator (Micah Loucks) and Technology & Organizational Development Manager (Jonathan Colo) lead two cross-departmental working groups – the Data Working Group and the Zoho Working Group – and recently spearheaded Data Equity Framework training for 20 staff members through We All Count. This framework is now being applied to TechTown's data-related work, which touches nearly every department.

Media Outreach

In Q1 2021, there were a total of 23 media hits on economic development topics, representing 7% of the university total.

Highlights and trending topics:

- Ned Staebler Op-ed: "How to flip the script on economic development in Michigan" (*Crain's Detroit Business*)
- Ned Staebler Op-ed: Governments have been heaping attention and money on 'high tech' companies for years. But now that almost every company uses tech, it's time to spread the love (*Business Insider*)
- Ned Staebler and Lou Glazer Op-ed: Michigan economic development is a failure. Time to focus on people. (*Bridge Michigan*)
- TechTown Detroit in the news:

- New TechTown Detroit program supports small business owners (*Detroit News*)
- Boot camp helps retailers navigate pitfalls of doing biz in pandemic (*Detroit News*)
- COVID-19 changed work for everybody (*Mlive*)
- Meet the unsung heroes you likely didn't hear about during the COVID-19 pandemic (*Yahoo News*)

Economic Development Group Fundraising Report

Business-Based Economic Development Fundraising

Programs @ TechTown

The fundraising outlook for 2021 is still very strong with 64% secured and an additional \$190,000 verbally committed but not reflected yet in the total. The pipeline includes another \$2,696,000 in requested (or soon-to-request) gifts. We anticipate more clarity in the coming weeks on what may become available via the American Recovery Plan and will organize to apply for all for which we are competitive.

The fundraising team launched TechTown's first-ever comprehensive individual donor campaign on April 19. The fund is currently 56% to goal. Sixty-two donors have committed to this fund with an average gift of \$102.89. Fifty-eight percent of the donors are new to TechTown. We will close it out at the end of June with a wine tasting (a first for TechTown) focused on highlighting diversity in the hospitality industry.

Toast of the Town, scheduled for 9/30, is well underway with sponsors already committing!

Office of Economic Development

The 10 year anniversary got some nice recognition in the Today at Wayne newsletter on May 17. [Read it here!](#) Changes to the website are forthcoming that will continue to tell the story of this unit's impact.

The Detroit Revitalization Fellows program – the leadership pipeline of talented mid-career professionals who are equipped with the tools to develop equitable opportunities throughout the economy – is focused on serving its alumni base while fundraising for the fifth cohort. Efforts for this are on-going.