



new
economy
initiative 2023

Annual Report



We've Built a National Model, It's Time to Scale It

Due to the ups and downs of the automotive industry, the Detroit Region has always been forced to address our economic resilience with increased frequency as the global economy has changed over time.

That's required us to roll up our sleeves and get creative, and build around our most consistent and important economic drivers: Small businesses.

Through the New Economy Initiative (NEI), the philanthropic leadership of Southeast Michigan has been working since 2007 to build a small business ecosystem centered around the belief that every single person who has a good idea should be able to start a business, scale that business, and grow that business. Our collaborative network of support has evolved into a national model for driving inclusive economic growth and resilience.

The secret to our success has been recognizing that entrepreneurship is a journey and one-size-fits-all approaches are doomed to fail.

Each small business owner is at a unique spot in their journey, so we must meet them where they are. Supporting them requires a cohesive network of trusted organizations that have their fingers on the pulse of the unique challenges their communities face. It also requires those organizations to have the resources to deliver the appropriate support at every step of the small business journey, and adapt as times change.

The strength of Detroit's small business ecosystem throughout the pandemic is the ultimate proof of concept: The path to a diversified, resilient economy is through entrepreneurs and inclusive business growth. The fact that many small businesses are still unable to access that support network reflects the urgency in expanding it.

To achieve true economic resilience as a region, we need to double down on what's worked in Detroit and build out our small business support network until any entrepreneur in Southeast Michigan can succeed.

Out of sheer necessity, we've built an innovative one-of-a-kind small business support ecosystem you can't find anywhere else — now it's time to scale it.



Wafa Dinero
Executive Director,
New Economy Initiative

2023



OUR MISSION

NEI's mission is to grow an inclusive community of entrepreneurship in Southeast Michigan that benefits all residents and strengthens the regional economy.

We do this by

Advocating for inclusive entrepreneurship by promoting underserved entrepreneurs' needs and galvanizing philanthropic and public funding to meet their needs.

Activating strategies, raising funds, and awarding grants to support **a network of nonprofits providing capital, assistance, and connections.**

Working with partners to use data and lessons learned to ensure the network is effective and to inform public sector leaders on the value of supporting underserved entrepreneurs.



new economy initiative



Results

AT A GLANCE

In 2023, NEI increased its focus on supporting small business support organizations throughout Wayne County while doubling down on existing efforts in the city of Detroit. Grants, ranging from \$50,000 to \$200,000, provided capital, technical and practical assistance, and connections to organizations that directly support entrepreneurs and small business owners throughout Southeast Michigan.



\$5.5M IN GRANTS

43 GRANTS
to 39 separate grantee partners,
including seven new grantees

4,739 COMPANIES ASSISTED
by NEI grantees through **9,252** support engagements

SMALL BUSINESSES
SERVED BY NEI GRANTEEES

81% LOCATED IN WAYNE COUNTY

52% ARE WOMEN-LED

85% LED BY PEOPLE OF COLOR

62% LOCATED IN THE CITY OF DETROIT



*NEI grants are not distributed on the calendar year. The data shared here is for the grantee program year of October 2022 to October 2023.

IMPACT SINCE 2009

725 GRANTS awarded to business support organizations
\$142.5 MILLION total of grants awarded
29,699 COMPANIES assisted by NEI grantees

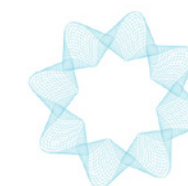


Capital On Ramp Pilot

Loans up to \$35,000 to 55 small businesses

Eligible businesses must be operating in Wayne County and in existence at least two years

OUR LENDERS



**DETROIT
DEVELOPMENT
FUND**
Helping You Get There



TECHNICAL PARTNERS



New Capital On Ramp Program Pairs Loans with Technical Assistance

Launched in 2023, NEI's Capital On Ramp (COR) program is partnering with mission lenders to provide loans to eligible small businesses while connecting them with technical assistance. COR clears a path for experienced business owners to access the funding they need through a straightforward and accessible application process, 1:1 coaching, and a cushion of debt service coverage.

The program empowers borrowers to repay their loans while enhancing their financial management capabilities — a game changer for small business owners who have a proven business, but may struggle through financial jargon and knowing their true expenses, or are turned off by unfamiliar paperwork.

Expanding Our Reach to Underserved Entrepreneurs

In 2023, NEI selected seven new grantees to expand our reach and provide support to more underserved small businesses and entrepreneurs in more places.



Industrial Sewing and Innovation Center

Detroit-based national nonprofit that helps its members run successful apparel and textile manufacturing businesses.



Live6 Alliance

Neighborhood-based community planning and development organization that connects entrepreneurs in Northwest Detroit to small business support services.



Michigan Hispanic Fund

The fund has a program in Lincoln Park that provides education, technical training, and entrepreneurial skills support to struggling individuals in the Hispanic business community.



Zaman International

Inkster-based nonprofit that provides training, technical assistance, mentorship, and coaching to aspiring female entrepreneurs many of whom are immigrants and/or refugees.



BasBlue

Midtown Detroit nonprofit supporting and mentoring women and non-binary entrepreneurs.



Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber Fund

Southeast Michigan nonprofit advocating for inclusive business practices while promoting and providing resources to LGBTQ+ and ally businesses.



Grace in Action Collectives

Southwest Detroit network of collectives and worker-owned cooperatives that empowers residents to bring their interests and talents to the market.



THE MUSHROOM ANGEL COMPANY

From Eastern Market to Stores in Six States and Beyond

In 2016, W.E. and Dom Da'Cruz took a leap of faith, relocating their young family from New York to Detroit.

They arrived in a city where they had no family, no business connections, and didn't know a soul. They set out with a belief in themselves, in the strength of their family, and the extraordinary opportunity they saw in Detroit — a city fresh off bankruptcy that offered entrepreneurs the chance to realize their dreams away from the sky-high costs of the East Coast.

"I always attest to the infinite amount of opportunities here in the city whether you're looking to be international or local," said W.E. "And that's what got us to Detroit. It was nothing else, but simply a curiosity

about what was possible for a city that was looking to revitalize itself. We thought we could be part of that transformation."

While Dom worked a business lending job with Dan Gilbert's Rapid Finance, W.E. was building a startup digital tech company, Virtual Global Consultant (VGC) Group — when one day in 2020, while making a veggie burger from scratch, she ran out of chickpeas.

Substituting mushrooms into the recipe led to a flavorful burger that cut and bit like meat, a catalytic moment that changed the trajectory of their lives — and The Mushroom Angel Company was born.

No Food Experience. A Global Pandemic. A Baby on the Way – No Problem

With their third child on the way, Dom would leave his job during the pandemic to perfect the recipe. That work would result in the Cruz Burger, a tasty veggie burger with a meat-like texture made with Cremini mushrooms as the main ingredient.

Having no experience in food production, and the pandemic shutting down the economy, W.E. and Dom made burgers out of their home and went door to door with free samples to gauge the market. The effort would lead the couple on a journey from Michigan State University's Product Center to the Fair Food Network to Eastern Market as they picked up knowledge and support along the way.

"You just don't know what you don't know," said W.E. "Unlocking one key led to unlocking the door, which unlocked the next door and the next door, in this large, exciting ecosystem."

As the couple perfected their product, they began to sell Cruz Burgers at Eastern Market on Sundays. They also mingled with restaurateurs and grocery store purchasers. It's there they met the owner of Rivertown Market, which landed their product on store shelves for the first time.

"Detroit has one of the most amazing business ecosystems because of access. It's just accessible," said W.E. "It's not like that on the East Coast. I don't know if it's because it's a smaller city, but that accessibility in the community is amazing, everyone is connected."

Those Eastern Market connections would lead to the shelves at four local Meijer stores. Settled into their larger Eastern Market space, the Cruz Burger is sold throughout much of Michigan as well as in Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Kentucky.

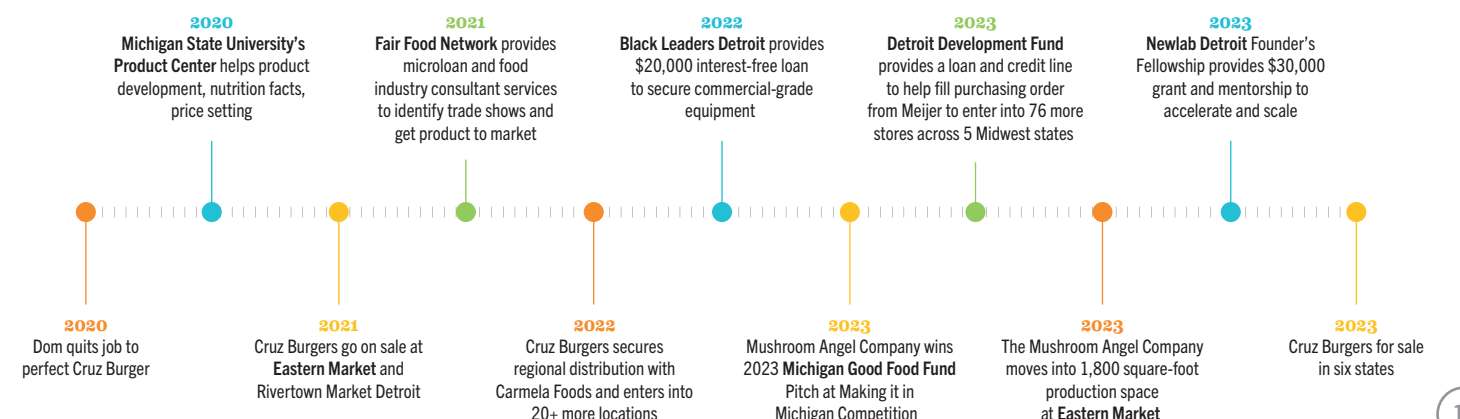


"We've been able to go from our home kitchen to across six different states in the Midwest. That's a testament to Detroit's small business ecosystem."

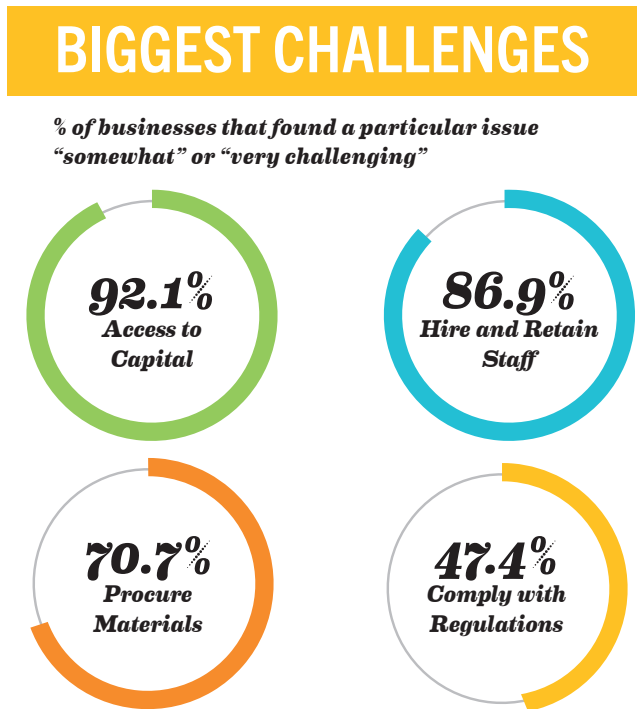
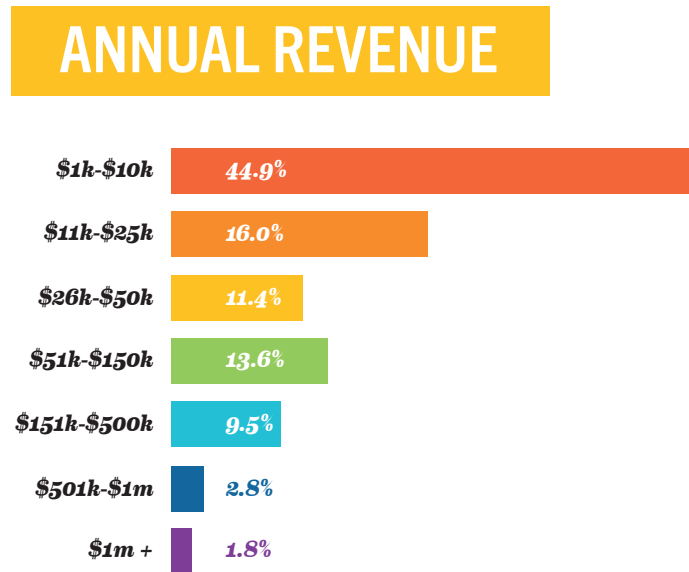
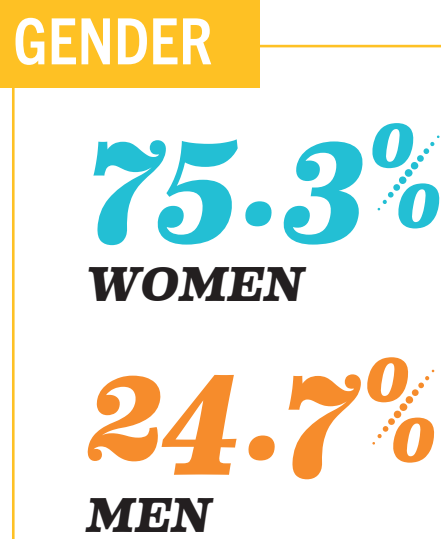
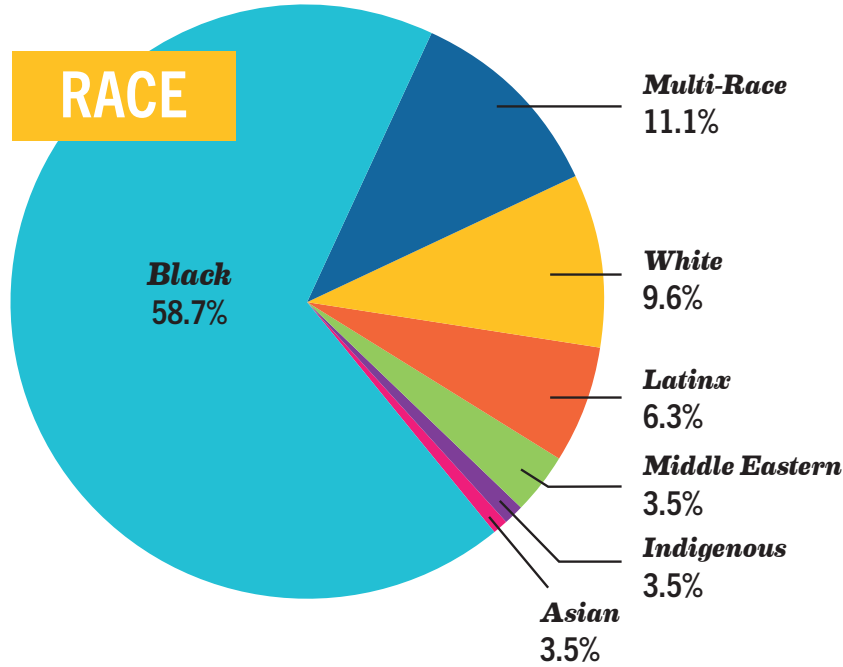
W.E. Da'Cruz Co-founder,
The Mushroom Angel Company

An Entrepreneurial Journey

The Mushroom Angel Company's story showcases Detroit's one-of-a-kind small business ecosystem NEI has helped build and is working to expand.



Demographics of Respondents



ACCESS TO CAPITAL LOOMS LARGE

Black business owners were **63% more likely** to find accessing capital very challenging compare to white business owners.

Business with generating less than \$50k in revenue found it almost **2x as challenging** compared to businesses generating over \$500k.



ELEVATING THE VOICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

More than 1,000 Respond to NEI Survey

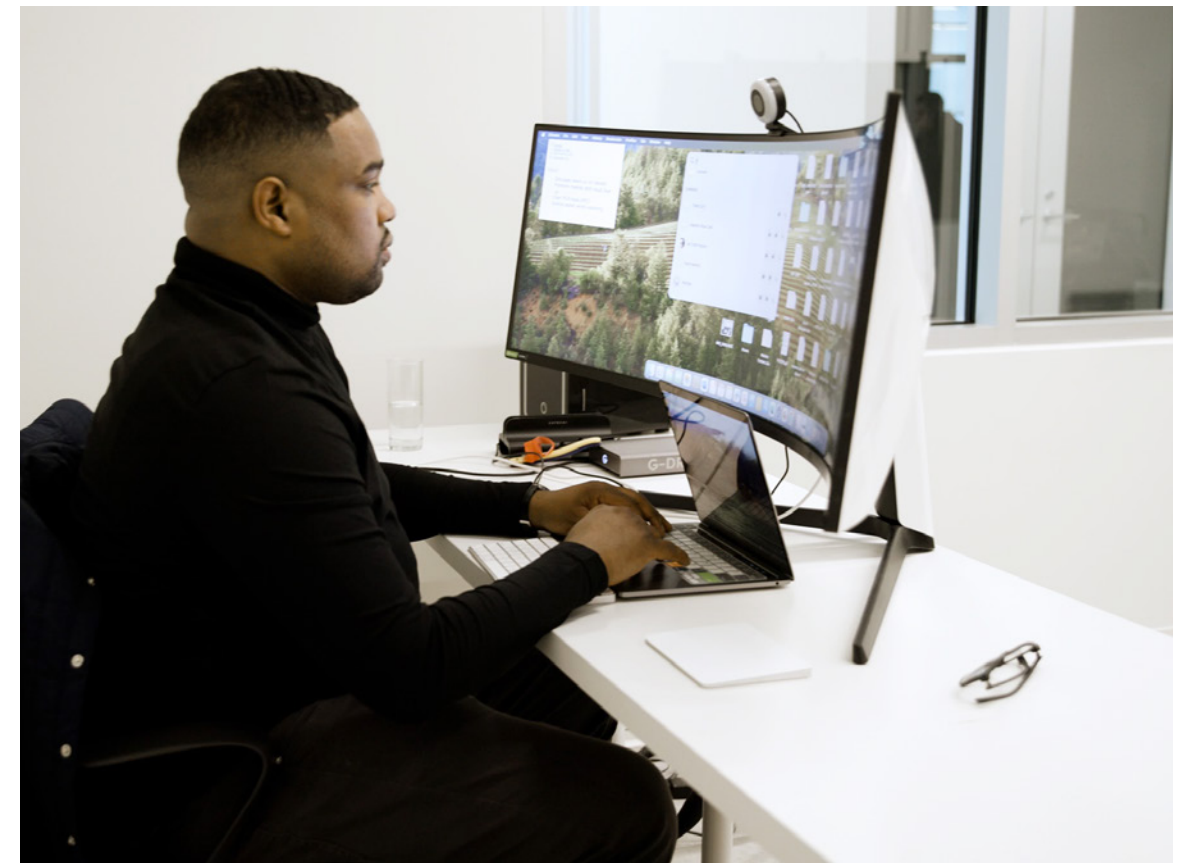
From May to August 2023, the New Economy Initiative’s Network Office conducted the “Elevate Your Voice” survey of small businesses to gather perspectives in Southeast Michigan’s entrepreneurship ecosystem and guide decision-making.

With the support and outreach of over 100 partner organizations, more than 1,000 respondents completed the 15-minute survey answering questions about their experiences, challenges, and goals. NEI also hosted in-person listening sessions with small business owners in the Dearborn, Inkster, and Downriver communities.

NEI plans to release a full report of survey results in 2024 and will use the data to help shape the future of small business funding, programs and policies and create an inclusive, sustainable and effective ecosystem for entrepreneurship and business growth for all.



TOTAL ANALYSIS



Preventing the Next Pandemic, Building the Next Biotech Hub

Preventing the next worldwide pandemic may come down to a textbook-sized device being developed in Detroit.

The brainchild of Dr. Darrell D. Marshall, a bioanalytical chemist and native Detroiters whose startup venture, Total Analysis, uses the same concept as explosive detection at airports. Rather than detecting bomb signatures, however, Marshall's technology charges ions to help identify a molecular fingerprint of pathogens.

Total Analysis uses surface-based swab technology to detect viruses and infections and other pathogens. The differentiator for Total Analysis is a database consisting of the molecular fingerprints of pathogens allowing it to test for all known pathogens in the same test, onsite, with no lengthy trip to the lab.

"Our whole focus is around detection of pathogens to help prevent the spread of these things to eliminate future pandemics," said Marshall, noting that the convenient technology is a natural fit for clinics, hospitals, and doctors' offices that treat people directly and rely on sterile environments.

Operating out of space in Newlab at Michigan Central and a lab at the Michigan Innovation Headquarters in Ann Arbor, Total Analysis has been aided by a regional network of funders and supporters, including NEI grantee TechTown, as he is designing his prototype and learning how to be an entrepreneur.

Total Analysis also received a grant from Detroit Means Business and support from Ann Arbor SPARK and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to help develop the prototype while winning the prestigious Small Business Innovation Research grant from the National Science Foundation.



"Entrepreneurship is about perseverance. Eventually, you break through. No matter how many times you bump your head, you always keep moving. I've learned so much about things, like how to commercialize my product, it's taken years off the process."

Dr. Darrell D. Marshall
Founder, Total Analysis

MISSION LENDERS

Organizations that provide flexible capital to small business owners that do not qualify for loans from traditional lenders, often operating as community development financial institutions. Some mission lenders provide technical assistance to their existing and potential borrowers, while others primarily rely on technical assistance providers.

Black Leaders Detroit **\$160,000**
No-interest loans to majority Black-led businesses in Detroit for expansion, working capital, and equipment purchase or rental.

Black Leaders Detroit **\$162,500**
Microloans to underserved businesses as part of the Capital On Ramp program, a multi-lender collaborative aimed at increasing access to capital.

Detroit Community Wealth Fund **\$120,000**
Public education, training, and non-extractive financing for existing worker-owned cooperatives and support for ownership transitions for business owners in Wayne County.

Detroit Development Fund **\$150,000**
Microloans and technical assistance to underrepresented businesses in Detroit, Hamtramck, and Highland Park.

Detroit Development Fund **\$80,500**
Microloans to underserved businesses as part of the Capital On Ramp program, a multi-lender collaborative aimed at increasing access to capital.

Fair Food Network **\$125,000**
Expanded technical support services to participating businesses through the Michigan Good Food Fund.

Michigan Women Forward **\$200,000**
Education, capital, technical assistance, and mentoring to under-resourced women entrepreneurs in the Detroit Region.

Michigan Women Forward **\$72,400**
Microloans to underserved businesses as part of the Capital On Ramp program, a multi-lender collaborative aimed at increasing access to capital.

ProsperUs Detroit Micro Lending **\$91,600**
Microloans to underserved businesses as part of the Capital On Ramp program, a multi-lender collaborative aimed at increasing access to capital.

ProsperUs Detroit Micro Lending **\$200,000**
Culturally competent training, financial coaching, technical assistance, and microlending for Wayne County entrepreneurs and small business owners.



Black Leaders Detroit offers no-interest loans to majority Black-led businesses in Detroit for expansion, working capital, and equipment purchase or rental.



BLACK LEADERS DETROIT

Closing Lending Equity Gaps Through No-Interest Loans

Black Detroiters have never lacked creativity, viable economic strategies, entrepreneurial zeal, or innovative business models, but they have lacked financial support – all too often finding themselves deemed “high-risk” and shut out by traditional lenders.

NEI grantee Black Leaders Detroit aims to rectify the effects of discriminatory behavior from traditional financial institutions by offering three-year, no-interest loans to help small businesses led by Detroiters of African American descent.

In 2023, Black Leaders Detroit was one of four business support organizations to participate in NEI’s new Capital On Ramp (COR) program, which pairs access to capital with technical assistance. It is designed to provide an on ramp to the lending system for experienced business owners without financial statements or financial management practices that may have prevented their success in lending in the past.

The program provides a comprehensive list of technical assistance providers ensuring that loan recipients receive additional support beyond the loan from Black Leaders Detroit. Once a loan is approved, the lender and borrower collaborate with coaches and accountants to ensure the business’s long-term financial health and sustainability through a customizable course of proven tools. The small businesses that complete the technical assistance can get six months of their loan forgiven.

“For Black entrepreneurs and the inequities that come with it – the next step is having folks in the banking industry lined up, ready to take some of these people as clients, proving that they are not high-risk and giving them traditional loans.”

Dwan Dandridge
CEO and Founder, Black Leaders Detroit



HOOKED ON BOOKS CHILDCARE

Embracing Small Businesses' Role in Revitalization

Following a car accident that left her with an undiagnosed traumatic brain injury in 1994, Yolanda Massey dropped out of community college. Unable to fully join the workforce as she developed epilepsy, she spent much of her time looking after her young nieces and nephews while seeking educational experiences for them at museums and the Detroit Zoo.

Over time, Massey would develop a passion for providing early child care and saw firsthand the transformative power of early childhood education for children six weeks to five years old. She opened Hooked on Books Childcare, an in-home group childcare business in 2015 while also returning to school to earn an associate degree in interior design.

When COVID hit, and her business received critical pandemic funding to stay solvent, she took the slow down as an opportunity to get certified as a child care director and set her sights on opening a child care center.

After receiving a grant from Motor City Match, Massey eventually purchased a 1,400-square-foot building on West McNichols in Detroit and put her interior design background to work transforming the vacant building into a vibrant licensed center.

"It needed a lot of love, including a new roof and plumbing. I had to do a lot of repairs on the building to get it ready for occupancy," she said.

After more than two years of renovation, the facility opened in October 2023 complete with a fenced in outdoor play area, interior learning spaces, and a kitchen to prepare nutritious meals. It also has the capacity for up to 28 children, more than double the number she could care for in her home.

As she's grown her business, Massey's received support from several business support organizations, including NEI grantee the Metro Detroit Black Business Alliance. She's attended resource and networking events and met other small business owners and embraced a role in neighborhood revitalization.

"If you don't know, someone else knows, and we help each other with the latest knowledge of technology, finance, and licensing. It helps you keep on top of the changes in the business world."

Yolanda Massey
Founder, Hooked on Books Childcare



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

Specialists in their field, technical assistance providers design and implement assistance programs that help entrepreneurs with specialized activities essential to growing and expanding a business. Trusted connectors and mission-based lenders often refer their small business clients to technical assistance (TA) providers for support in marketing or accounting services or business plan or product development.

Accounting Aid Society **\$200,000**
Accounting Aid Academy to provide accounting and tax assistance services to small business owners in Detroit and Wayne County.

BasBlue **\$125,000**
Programming designed to empower women entrepreneurs through one-on-one coaching, networking, events, and capital access.

Build Institute **\$150,000**
Entrepreneur and small business education programs, and to increase organizational capacity to meet growing needs, including ongoing engagements with Build program alumni.

LTU Centropolis Accelerator **\$200,000**
Micro Makers Evolution Lab to serve underserved small businesses that are makers of physical products or discrete goods manufacturers.

College for Creative Studies -Design Core Detroit **\$150,000**
Design Core Detroit to strengthen Detroit's creative businesses and connect them to small businesses seeking design services to fuel growth.

Detroit Economic Growth Corporation **\$125,000**
BuyDetroit business-to-business procurement program connecting buyers with Detroit-based and national suppliers.

Eastern Market Corporation **\$150,000**
Targeted technical assistance, one-on-one coaching, and cohort-based learning for non-food and food-based entrepreneurs and small businesses in Eastern Market.

Endeavor Detroit **\$150,000**
General operations as well as the National Selection program which supports early-stage founders so they can scale their businesses.

Grace in Action Collectives **\$100,000**
Training, technical assistance, and outreach for cooperatively owned businesses in Southwest Detroit.

Great Lakes Women's Business Council **\$180,000**
Expand the Business Growth program and provide additional complementary services.

ISAIC - Industrial Sewing and Innovation Center **\$150,000**
Worker-owned factory incubation program designed to position individuals who have historically faced barriers to employment obtain the knowledge to be successful business owners.

Michigan Small Business Development Center **\$75,000**
Counseling and training support services to small businesses in targeted Wayne County communities.

Right to Start **\$100,000**
Capacity building to advance equitable entrepreneurs as a civic priority and advocate for civic initiatives that would reduce barriers to entrepreneurship on the local and state levels.

SCORE Foundation **\$50,000**
Service Corps of Retired Executives Association-Southeast Michigan Chapter for recruitment and onboarding to expand the small business mentoring program.

Wayne State University Research and Technology Park (TechTown) **\$175,000**
Small Businesses Services program to provide training for and connect resources to underserved small businesses in Wayne County.

Zaman International **\$125,000**
Workforce development program to provide training, technical assistance, mentorship, and coaching to aspiring women entrepreneurs.



DETROIT HISPANIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

“You might know how to make money and hustle, but formalizing that into a legitimate legal entity that can receive funding, and you can grow and scale, is completely different. A lot of our residents have no idea, and it's a stumbling block.”

Anita Zavala
Entrepreneurship and Wealth Building Director,
Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation

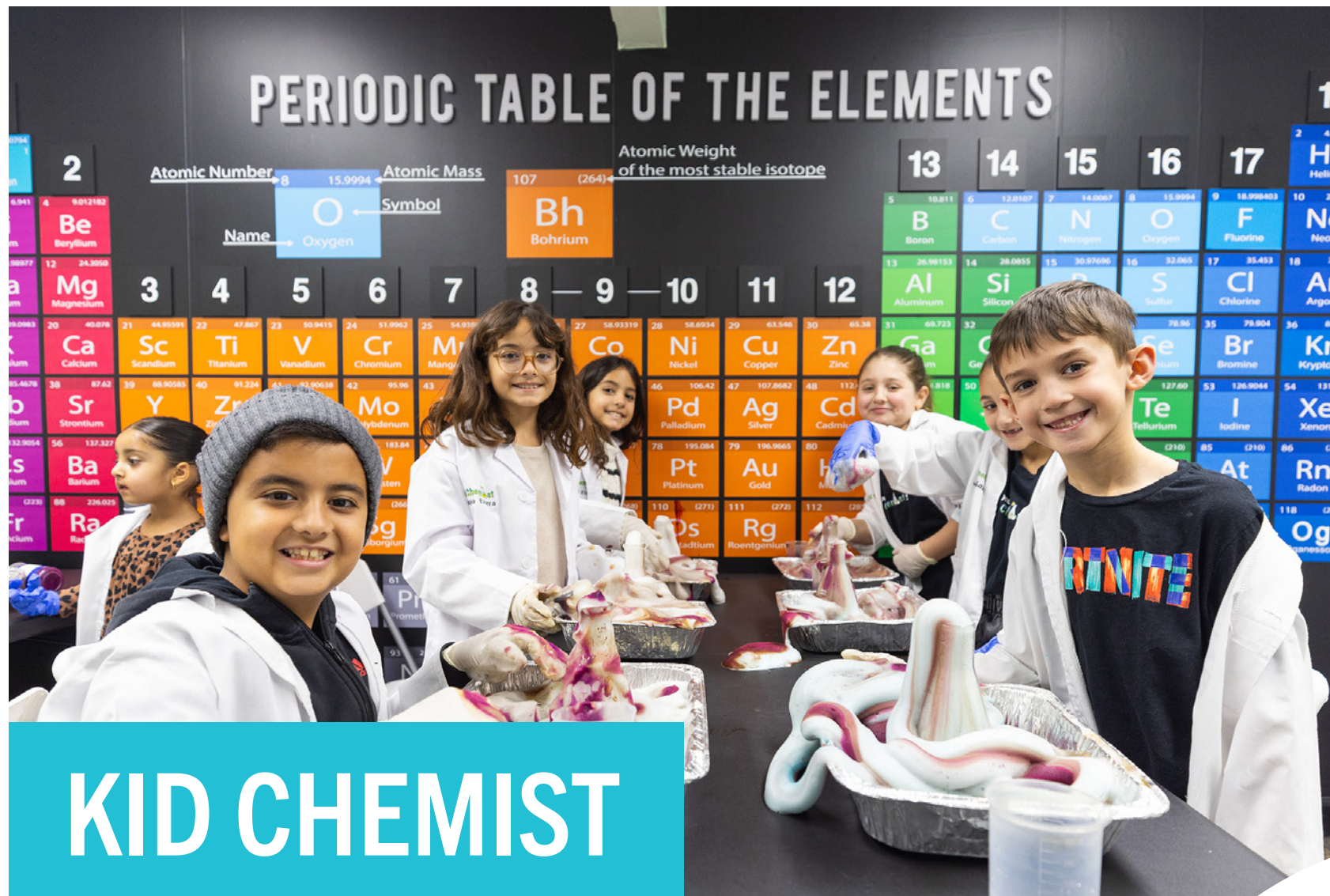
From Side Hustle to CEO

Language and cultural barriers often prevent underserved entrepreneurs from turning their successful side hustle into a legitimate small business with real growth potential.

That's where NEI grantee the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation (DHDC) steps in. It offers 1:1 business coaching to small business owners in English or Spanish and provides the basic planning and financial forecasting needed to operate a successful business.

In programs such as “Side Hustle to CEO,” the DHDC helps Hispanic small business owners formalize their businesses by filing for an LLC or creating an Employer Identification Number, which is necessary to open a bank account, apply for permits, and access government funding.

While serving many clients in Southwest Detroit, DHDC is expanding its small business support in Downriver communities with growing Hispanic populations, including Ecorse, River Rouge, and Lincoln Park – areas with high poverty rates, struggling schools, and underserved populations that struggle to accumulate wealth.



KID CHEMIST

Finding Her Purpose Through Hands-On Education

When her curious six- and seven-year-old nieces began observing her studying for dental school, Zahraa Mougneh developed hands-on experiments to teach them advanced scientific concepts and saw them light up as they learned. As she juxtaposed that experience with watching students bored in class at her job as a parapro at a local middle school, she had an epiphany: There's a demand for providing engaging, curriculum-based, hands-on educational experiences.

The result is Kid Chemist, Mougneh's company that offers hands-on educational experiences for kids of all ages from experiential weekly chemistry classes and one-on-one tutoring to school assemblies and holiday parties. It also offers kits that tackle science experiments in a fun way; complete with a white lab coat embroidered with the child's name.

While the science and teaching came naturally to Mougneh, and she put dentist school on hold to pursue the venture, the business side of things presented challenges.

"The hardest thing is keeping up with everything. Just the finances, the taxes, and all of the things that go into running a business," said Mougneh. The 22-year-old found support in organizations such as ACCESS and the Arab American Women's Business Council, both NEI grantees, which provided her connections, resources, and marketing support.

Now having reached thousands of kids through Kid Chemist, Mougneh is franchising the business with its second location in Novi.



"Kid Chemist is about making learning as fun as possible so kids can grasp information easier. I fell in love with Kid Chemist as I saw the impact that I was having on kids. I found what my purpose was."

Zahraa Mougneh
Founder, Kid Chemist

2023

TRUSTED CONNECTORS

Organizations that maintain trusted relationships with small businesses through community-based engagement while focusing on specific geographies, population segments, and/or industry sectors. Trusted connectors typically refer small business owners to other resources in the ecosystem, but sometimes provide their own practical assistance services.

Arab American Women's Business Council **\$60,000**

Small business services for businesses owned by women of Arab American descent in Wayne County.

Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) **\$135,000**

Business development programming and technical assistance for immigrant entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Central Detroit Christian CDC **\$65,000**

Business development and coaching in Detroit's Central Woodward/North End neighborhood.

Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation **\$120,000**

Outreach to small businesses in Southwest Detroit and Downriver, to provide technical assistance and connect them to other resources.

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber Fund **\$100,000**

Cohort-based program providing support and technical assistance for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ small-business owners.

E. Warren Development Corp. **\$100,000**

Small business wrap-around service model that assists businesses from ideation to establishing brick and mortar operations.

Eastside Community Network **\$100,000**

Courses, workshops, business advisory services, co-working space for small businesses with a focus on women and BIPOC owners.

Global Detroit **\$200,000**

Connections to resources to sustain and grow immigrant and minority small businesses in Detroit and Wayne County.

Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation **\$110,000**

Small business development and economic development programming that supports BIPOC microbusinesses in the Grandmont Rosedale community.

Jefferson East, Inc. **\$115,000**

Services for new and existing small businesses operating on East Jefferson Avenue and along the surrounding commercial corridors.

Live6 Alliance **\$100,000**

Education, technical assistance, and resource navigation to enhance economic opportunity and build a pipeline of resourced entrepreneurs in northwest Detroit.

Metro Detroit Black Business Alliance **\$150,000**

Expand the capacity of business service programs serving small, Black-owned businesses in Wayne County.

Michigan Hispanic Fund **\$100,000**

Deliver services to address the critical needs and advancement of small businesses in the Hispano/Latino entrepreneurial community in Lincoln Park.

Midtown Detroit, Inc. **\$150,000**

Small Business Support program serving businesses within Midtown Detroit and the adjacent neighborhoods.

Osborn Neighborhood Alliance **\$120,000**

Help new and existing Osborn neighborhood businesses start and grow by connecting them to resources and business coaching.

Southwest Detroit Business Association **\$85,000**

Small business services and commercial corridor surveying in Southwest Detroit.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



ARAB AMERICAN WOMEN'S BUSINESS COUNCIL

A Natural Fit

Resource Connection Project Reaches 200 Small Businesses in First Year

For over 15 years, the Arab American Women's Business Council (AAWBC) has connected Arab American small business owners with the resources they need to sustain or scale their operations.

Those ties are reflected in the success of AAWBC's Resource Connection Project, an effort made possible by a \$60,000 NEI grant. In the program's first year in 2023, it served 200 Arab American-owned small businesses spanning 15 cities in Southeast Michigan. Of those 200 small businesses, 45% were women-owned.

"It was a natural fit," said AAWBC's Project Manager Reda Taleb. "Because NEI was trying to choose organizations that had a formidable presence in their communities. As trusted connectors, small organizations can really bring to life that nuance that's often missing and address the complexities and unique dynamics within the community from language to family structure to culture."

As part of the program, AAWBC provides small business owners with a free 30-minute consultation to identify its most pressing needs and then refers them to appropriate resources for things such as marketing, capital lending, legal expertise, networking opportunities, and accounting services. The grant has allowed the AAWBC to add paid professionals, including college interns, who are available to its clients throughout their small business journey. It has also led to AAWBC securing funding from other sources.

"That's the beauty of the ecosystem that NEI has been so pivotal in creating, and why the funding they provide is so important. They give smaller organizations an opportunity to build programs that they couldn't afford, and then take it to that next level and sustain that project beyond the grant money that NEI provided."

Reda Taleb

Project Manager,
Arab American Women's Business Council



FREEDOM CLEANING COMPANY

Timely Loan Support Leads to a Growing Business Venture

As Eutan Ngoulou revealed in winning a contract with a Hotel Indigo Detroit for his startup small business Freedom Cleaning Company in 2021 — he faced a stressful challenge that could sink the deal.

The cleaning contract paid monthly, but he didn't have the cash on hand to make weekly payroll.

That's when he and Freedom Cleaning Company turned to a familiar supporter: ProsperUs Detroit. The NEI grantee, who'd been supporting Ngoulou along his entrepreneurial journey, provided a small business loan allowing him to pay his employees and fulfill the contract.

A few short years later, Freedom Cleaning Company is providing residential and commercial cleaning services in several cities including Canton, Detroit, Dearborn, Farmington, Oak Park, and Roseville. And Ngoulou, fresh off renovating a house he purchased from the Detroit Land Bank, has launched his second business: Freedom Rental Investment. The company offers an array of services from rental management to property maintenance and renovations.

Between the two businesses, Ngoulou has 10 part- or full-time employees, and as his business footprint has grown, he savors providing jobs to Detroiters.

"My vision is to contribute to Detroit so it can be the best and beautiful city where people can take rest, enjoy the city, and do business," said Ngoulou, whose journey shows the impact of a reliable, comprehensive small business support network that meets entrepreneurs where they are.

After arriving in Detroit from Congo in 2015 and achieving stability at Freedom House, a nonprofit that supports and empowers refugees and asylum seekers — Ngoulou secured employment cleaning services, a job similar to the professional maintenance and cleaning work he did as an internationally for seven years prior to coming to the U.S.

Eventually, after expressing interest in entrepreneurship at Freedom House, he was referred to ProsperUs Detroit where he received financial support, language skills, and business resources and graduated from its entrepreneurship training program in 2016. With continued support, Ngoulou then launched his first business in 2020, naming it in honor of Freedom House.



"ProsperUs Detroit gave me so much. First they gave me training, then financial support, then information and business advice."

Eutan Ngoulou
Founder, Freedom Cleaning Company



JEFFERSON EAST, INC.

Neighborhood Support, Neighborhood Win-Win-Win

The Community Tech Worker Program operated by NEI grantee Jefferson East, Inc. offers a win-win-win by empowering neighborhood residents to provide tech training to local small business owners. In the process, the community tech workers launch their own careers, and aid in building Detroit's tech scene while helping small businesses employ technology to save time and money.

The community tech workers do not provide IT support, rather they train the small business owners to handle their own technology issues on their own. This can include anything from adding a button to their website to implementing inventory tracking software.

One example, restaurant Detroit Soul had been tediously tracking its inventory with pen and paper. Working with a community tech worker from Jefferson East's program, the restaurant owners cut the cumbersome process down to about 30 minutes for each of their two locations.

"One of the biggest resources that a business needs is time," said Lutalo Sanifu, Jefferson East's Director of Neighborhood Resilience, Safety & Business District Services. "We're showing them how to use their point-of-sale system to track inventory so they don't have to track it manually."

Launching as a pilot in 2022 in partnership with the University of Michigan's Detroit Neighborhood Entrepreneurs Project, the Community Tech Worker program has served over 190 small businesses along the East Jefferson corridor.



"I've heard over and over that Detroit is the next tech hub. Well, if the Googles come and Detroiters don't have the skills to get those jobs, then we get left behind. The solution is we train them – they get the tech skills they deliver in the neighborhood to the small businesses, and it's a great stepping stone."

Lutalo Sanifu

*Director of Neighborhood Resilience, Safety & Business District Services
Jefferson East, Inc.*



SUPPORTING THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Highlighting Public-Private Partnerships at Mackinac

New Economy Initiative's Wafa Dinero joined the Hudson-Webber Foundation's Melanca Clark, Joe Louis Greenway's Leona Medley, Michigan Justice Fund's Ashley Carter, and Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan's Ric DeVore to highlight successful public-private partnerships in economic and community development and the potential to support criminal legal reform at the 2023 Mackinac Policy Conference.

“The next Fortune 500 company is already here. The idea is with someone in our ecosystem – within our region.”

Wafa Dinero
Executive Director, New Economy Initiative

Micro Makers Evolution Lab Pitch Event

The New Economy Initiative sponsored the Centropolis Accelerator at Lawrence Technological University Micro Makers Evolution Lab pitch event. The event helps underserved and/or underrepresented micro makers create market viable products.



Entrepreneur Funders Network in Los Angeles

Detroit made quite an impression in L.A. this fall. The New Economy Initiative and Black Leaders Detroit shared perspective and lessons from the Motor City with a national audience while highlighting the new Capital On Ramp program. The Entrepreneurs Funders Network is an inclusive peer network of funders committed to learning and working together.



new economy initiative

Providing Procurement Guides for Beauty, Food, Retail and Transportation Industries

In an effort to assist small business owners with the procurement space, NEI and its partners published procurement guides that provide a step-by-step checklist to follow for the beauty, food, retail, and transportation industries. The guides were created through a partnership between NEI, the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber, and Signature Admin Solutions, LLC and were created as a result of NEI's Neighborhood Business Initiative (NBI) Worktable.

Designed to help NEI keep its finger on the pulse of neighborhood businesses, the NBI Worktable regularly convenes more than 60 small business support organizations and other key stakeholders to foster a dialogue and seek alignment of activities to address short- and long-term needs of neighborhood businesses.

MEET THE NEW NEI ADVISORY BOARD

This year, NEI created a five-person advisory board to help guide its strategy and programming to build a more resilient and inclusive economy. It meets on a quarterly basis and provides insight on how to best support small businesses in underserved populations and communities throughout Southeast Michigan.



Paul Brown
Managing Director
eLab Ventures



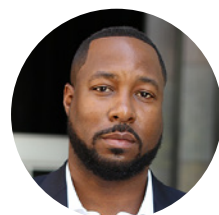
Jose L. Flores
Chief Executive Officer
Ancor Automotive



Khalil Rahal
Director of Economic Development
DTE Energy



Maria Thompson
Venture Partner
Arsenal Growth



Nathaniel Wallace
Head of Civic Partnerships
Michigan Central

“This diverse and talented group of professionals share a commitment to Southeast Michigan and offer unique expertise, perspective, and experience that will help guide our strategy as we work to create inclusive small business growth.”

Wafa Dinaro
Executive Director, NEI



THE NEI TEAM



Wafa Dinaro
Executive Director



Mary Fulmer
Senior Program Officer



Roxana Martinelli
Program Manager



Paul Jones
Director, Business Support
Network Office



Chanel Stitt
Communications Associate



Lily Hamburger
Associate Director, Business
Support Network Office

OUR FUNDERS

The work of the New Economy Initiative is made possible by the generous support of collaborating local and national foundations.





new economy initiative

neweconomyinitiative.org

333 West Fort Street, Suite 2010
Detroit, MI 48226

NEI is a philanthropic collaboration and initiative of
the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.