



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO CASE STUDY



Through the generous support of our four funding partners (Franklin County, the Columbus Partnership, Rev1 Ventures, and the Columbus Foundation) Forward Cities has worked with a set of cross-sector community stakeholders to:

1. **Discover** Franklin County's current and evolving entrepreneurial landscape
2. **Design** interventions to persistent barriers to entrepreneurship and small business growth among entrepreneurs and small business owners of color
3. **Deliver** measured impact of the interventions for sustainable change

DISCOVER

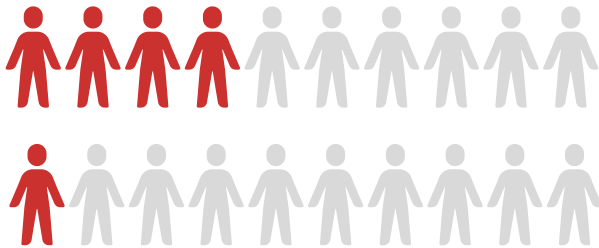
We assessed the barriers facing local Black and Latinx entrepreneurs to establish a baseline from which to measure progress.

WEALTH GAP



29 percentage point difference in the proportion of families living in homes they owned: white (non-Hispanic) 62% vs Black 33%

ENTREPRENEURIAL DENSITY



Substantial differences in the rate of business ownership between white and Black adults (22.4 and 4.0 per 1,000 adults, respectively)

EARNINGS GAP



Among full time workers, for every \$1 earned by white (non-Hispanic) males, white (non-Hispanic) women earned \$0.83, Black men earned \$0.66, and Black women earned \$0.65



Between 2012 and 2016, the earnings gap between white (non-Hispanic) workers and Black workers grew by 27% (2012: \$9,322 to 2016: \$11,860)

PILOT NEIGHBORHOODS ENTREPRENEUR SURVEY, 2019

(Individuals who currently owned a business or were trying to start a business were asked about their most pressing needs)

≤ \$30,000

47% of participants report revenue of \$30,000 or less suggesting their current business was unlikely to provide sufficient income to support their work full time

< 1/3

Less than a third of current business owners felt support organizations understood the challenges and opportunities they face.

ENTREPRENEUR SUPPORT ORGANIZATION (ESO) SURVEY, 2020

(Organizations providing direct services to aspiring entrepreneurs and current business owners were asked about their characteristics, resources, and connectivity between organizations within the local ecosystem)

31%

31% of participants reported that organizations were “very successful” or “completely successful” at working together to support entrepreneurs and small business owners.

DESIGN

We worked with local stakeholders to develop 2 Minimum Viable Solutions designed to address barriers found in the Discovery Phase.



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**WHAT WAS MOST HELPFUL
WAS THE INFORMATION THEY
RECEIVED...**

PROGRAM
FACILITATOR

”

1. SIDE HUSTLE TO CEO

Difficulty transitioning a business idea and side job, or “side hustle,” to a formal business was among the key barriers to equity in entrepreneurship. A lack of information on pathways to success and the resources available from ESOs were intermediate roadblocks for the transition.

THE SIDE HUSTLE TO CEO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PROVIDED 1:1 COACHING AND MENTORSHIP SERVICES TO EXISTING SIDE-HUSTLE ENTREPRENEURS WHO HAD BEEN UNABLE TO GROW THEIR BUSINESS INTO A FULL-TIME VENTURE.

A Side Hustle to CEO coach served as an ecosystem ‘conciierge’, connecting entrepreneurs to additional resources in the local ecosystem. Upon completion, each business owner received a \$1,000 cash incentive to support the formalization of their business as prescribed by their coach.



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**WITH THESE NEW SOLUTIONS,
I ANTICIPATE TO BECOME ONE
OF COLUMBUS' GO-TO
RESTAURANTS**

PARTICIPANT

”

2. INNOVATION SPRINTS

Difficulty sustaining and expanding current businesses was among the barriers to equity in entrepreneurship; especially for under-connected and under-resourced entrepreneurs.

THE INNOVATION SPRINT PROGRAM WAS ENVISIONED AS AN ACCELERATED OPPORTUNITY FOR NEIGHBORHOOD-LEVEL RETAIL/FOOD BUSINESSES, IN THE KING LINCOLN OR WHITEHALL NEIGHBORHOODS, TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE, EXPERTISE, AND CAPITAL INFUSION.

Facilitated “sprints” (i.e., innovation workshops) brought together a curated fractional ‘C-Suite’ of experts to provide high-level consulting to help entrepreneurs identify barriers to growth and ideate on solutions. Participants who completed the program received a \$5,000 award to help support continuing growth efforts.

DELIVER

We evaluated our interventions' success using the baseline reported in the Discovery Phase.

SIDE HUSTLE TO CEO

Oct 2019 - Apr 2020



67% had taken at least two additional steps toward formalizing or developing their business.



92% agreed that there were effective entrepreneur support organizations available for people like them.

INNOVATION SPRINTS

Jan 2019 - Nov 2020



60% reported the program expanded their network of mentors for their business. 60% reported an increase in customers.



80% reported an improvement in a business specific metric identified during the assessment.



All 5 participants completed the program in full and received the \$5,000 incentive. All participants reported an increase in revenue.

VIRTUAL TOWNHALL

Forward Cities hosted a facilitated discussion that served as a community-wide opportunity to discuss the unique challenges faced by marginalized entrepreneurs. This “virtual think tank” was the only convening of its type to bring together ESOs and ecosystem building professionals for a candid sharing of ideas and resources.

ABIDE TRAINING

We offered Franklin County ESOs the opportunity to participate in our proprietary ABIDE workshop aimed at exploring the cross-section of economic development, business development, and community development through an equity lens. This training served as the cultural competency component of the engagement.



To read more about our approach or to learn how we can collaborate with your community, please visit ForwardCities.org or contact Brett Brenton at bbrenton@forwardcities.org.