



WOOD

Event provides free resources for Black entrepreneurs

Amanda Porter

February 20, 2024 · 3 min read



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (WOOD) — A Black entrepreneur mixer event Tuesday night was aimed at getting small businesses the boost they need.

Grand Rapids can be a lucrative city when it comes to programs to get information and money into the hands of Black entrepreneurs.

“To work with us there is no cost at all,” explained Ed Garner, regional director of the [West Michigan Small Business Development Center](#).

[LIST: Black History Month events in West Michigan 2024](#)

Whether you are starting out or growing your business, the West Michigan SBDC has a team ready to meet your needs. SBDC does three major things

"This is a statewide network so we have access to any consultant in the network so if we don't know something we can reach out to our folks across the state and get answers for you," Garner said.

Secondly, SBDC focuses on market research.

"We use graduate students since we are at a university, Grand Valley State University. We can use them to provide free market research that large companies use to make business decisions," said Garner.

Thirdly it helps with education and training.

"We do a lot of webinars. We do in-person training, and we are still looking to do a business fair and so forth this year," said Garner.

Black businesses got hit the hardest during the pandemic and many are still struggling. Resources are also needed for Black-owned businesses due to being historically disenfranchised.

[Some businesses thrived, many lagged during pandemic in 2020](#)

"Black-owned businesses have more barriers when looking for loan or loan products or grants as well. There are not many grants I can tell you right now but there are small business products," explained Garner.

Some local resources include [Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses](#) and [Start Garden](#).

"We always say that there is not a bad idea, and the market is not saturated. There is always room for everybody, but you have to be able to articulate as to why that idea is going to make an impact and why your idea is worth 5K or 20K. We do grants of \$5,000 for the 5x5 pitch competition grant every month. This month, we are celebrating Black History Month. So, we partnered with Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses," said Jorge Gonzalez, a director at [Start Garden](#).

"So tonight, we did our first 'GRABB and Go' of the year. Our GRABB and Go is a meeting for Black-owned businesses and it also has a workshop component. So, tonight's workshop was around financial documents. Our speaker Mariel Harmon was talking about how accounting is the future of business," said Jamiel Robinson, president and CEO of [Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses](#).

Tuesday night's mixer is one of the many events and resources in Grand Rapids to empower and support Black businesses with money and info.

process to help you win that money,” Garner said.

“Before the pitch competition next week, we are doing a Black business mixer,” said Robinson. “So definitely come out. It’s going to be us, GRABB, it’ll be Northern Initiatives and a few other entrepreneurial systems that will be here providing resources for businesses. And Start Garden does the pitch competition every month so if they weren’t able to get in it for this month they can get in it for next month.”

The next [5x5 competition](#) hosted by GRABB will be at Start Garden Feb. 27 starting at 5 p.m.

There is also a [National Black Business Pitch competition](#) open through June.

[For the latest news, weather, sports, and streaming video, head to WOODTV.com.](#)

 [View comments](#)



