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Event offers free resources for Black entrepreneurs

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by Shawn Johnson — February 21, 2024 in Entrepreneurship



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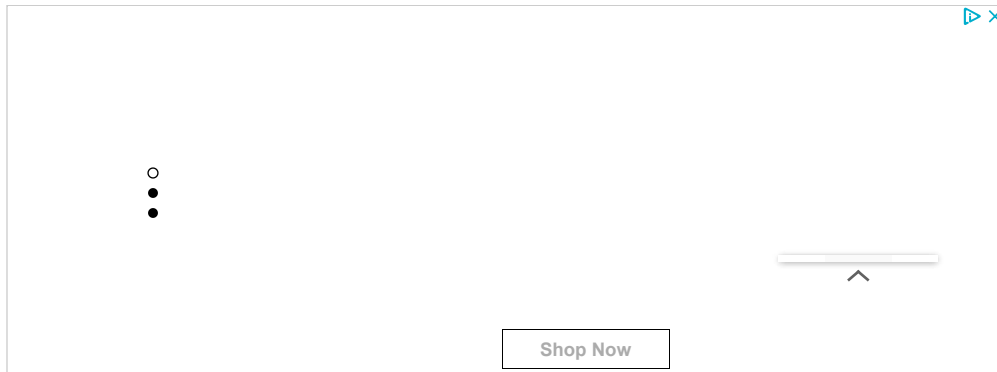
GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (WOOD) – A Black Entrepreneur Mixer event Tuesday night aimed to give small businesses the boost they need.

Grand Rapids could be an attractive city when it comes to programs to get information and money into the hands of Black entrepreneurs.

“There is no cost to work with us,” said Ed Garner, regional director of . **West Michigan Small Business Development Center**,

List: Black History Month Events in West Michigan 2024

Whether you're starting or growing your business, the West Michigan SBDC has a team ready to meet your needs. SBDC performs three major functions for businesses. The first is consultancy.



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“It’s a statewide network, so we have access to any advisor in the network, so if we don’t know something we can reach out to our people across the state and get answers for you,” Garner said. “

Secondly, SBDC focuses on market research.

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

Third, it helps in education and training.

“We do a lot of webinars. We do in-person training and we’re still looking at hosting a business fair and things like that this year, Garner said.

Black businesses were hit hardest during the pandemic and many are still struggling. Black-owned businesses are also in need of resources due to their historically disenfranchised status.

Some businesses thrived during the pandemic in 2020, many lagged behind



about right now but there are small business products," Garner explained.

Some local resources include **Black businesses in the Grand Rapids area** And **start a garden**,

"We always say there are no bad ideas, and the market is not saturated. There's always room for everyone, but you have to be able to articulate why that idea will make an impact and why your idea is worth 5K or 20K. We give away \$5,000 in 5x5 pitch competition grants every month. This month, we are celebrating Black History Month. So, we partnered with Grand Rapids area Black businesses," said George Gonzalez, a director **start a garden**,

"So tonight, we did our first 'Grab and Go' of the year. Our GRABB and Go is a meeting for black-owned businesses and 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 the profession," said Jamille Robinson, President and CEO. **Black Businesses in the Grand Rapids Area**.

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

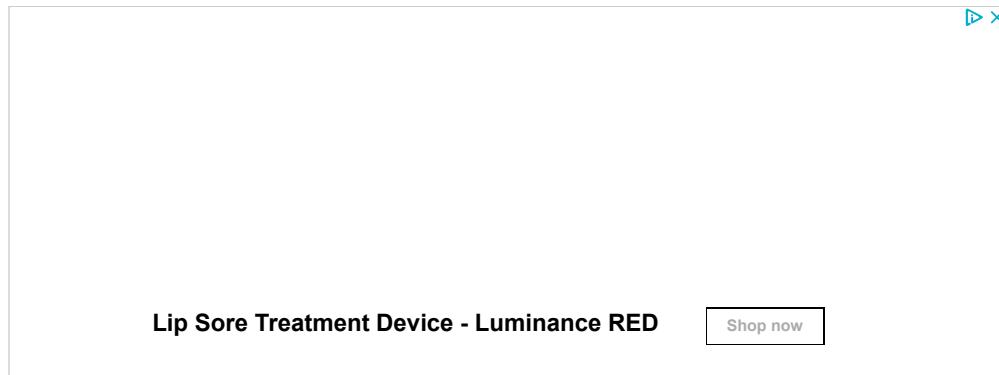
"You can always come to the SBDC. "All the pitch competitions that are out there help you develop your pitch deck or your pitch program or process, which helps you win money," Garner said.

"Next week before the pitch competition, we're having a Black business mixer," Robinson said. "Then definitely come out. It will be us, GRABB, it will be Northern Initiatives and some other entrepreneurial systems that will provide resources for businesses here. And Start Garden does a pitch competition every month so if they can't get in this month, they can get in next month.

next **5x5 competition** Organized by GRABB, the event will take place on February 27 at 5pm in Start Garden

there is also a **National Black Business Pitch Competition** Open till June.

Source: www.woodtv.com



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