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Small business owners are always grappling with growth. The Small Business Administration (SBA) offers e200, a national program focused on providing educational opportunities to entrepreneurs in urban areas. There are 21 participating cities across the country, including Detroit.

The goal of the SBA Emerging 200 initiative is to identify 200 businesses across the country that show a high potential for growth and to provide them the network, resources and motivation required to build a sustainable business of size and scale. SBA is increasing outreach to areas historically challenged by high levels of unemployment and poverty. Bolstering entrepreneurial success in these areas will generate new jobs, attract investment, and provide a more sustainable economic base in distressed areas.

The initiative will enable the participating small businesses to engage in an intensive curriculum focused on developing a winning, expansion strategy for their business, including options for capital access and contracting. Participants also will have the opportunity to work with experienced mentors, attend workshops and develop connections with their peers, city leaders and financial community.

Since its inception, e200 has identified business owners who show a high potential for growth in underserved markets and provided them with the training, networking, resources and motivation required to expand operations and create jobs. The curriculum is StreetWise Steps, which was developed by Boston-based Interise.

To date, more than half of the businesses that participated in e200 have seen an increase in revenue, and nearly two-thirds have created new jobs. Entrepreneurs who have completed the training have secured over \$9 million in new financing for their businesses. Increased confidence in applying for government contracts among trainees has resulted in over \$1.3 million awarded to participating small businesses.

The six-month training includes approximately 100 hours of classroom time per participant and provides the opportunity for small business owners to work with experienced mentors, attend workshops and develop connections with their peers, city leaders and financial community.

Detroit is one of several cities to have e200. Meeting every two weeks at TechTown, from April through October, Detroit-based businesses came together in a classroom environment and became entrenched in a rigorous MBA-style program. The goal was to develop a three-year growth plan. Additionally, entrepreneurs were to identify strategies focused on long-term sustainability and, ultimately, success. Not only is the goal to invest and grow their business, these entrepreneurs were encouraged to invest in their community by hiring local talent.

Entrepreneurs were encouraged to “work on the business” by analyzing current practices, understanding “gaps” and developing plans which were consistent with their business objectives. They were also encouraged to work in small groups. The mentoring group is where the entrepreneurs would challenge each other, provide support and brainstorm ideas focused on growth. In essence, an advisory board was created.

The Detroit office of the SBA recently recognized the following businesses at a special program at TechTown:

- Jasmine Holt, Abbeville Treats, LLC
- Jason Dixon, Dixon Medical Supply
- Mike Chaudhary, DMC Construction
- Diana Geier, Eastern Michigan Distributors Co.
- Ronald Jones, II Empire Equipment & Supply Co.
- Balaji Satyavarapu Igrid Technologies, Inc.
- Rob McCall, McCall Educational Services
- Edna Bell, SERCH Services, Inc.
- Lane Coleman, Strike Group, LLC
- Tarik Lester, Transcend Technology
- Vickie J. Lewis, VMX International

Congratulations on a job well done! If you’re interested in learning more about e200, please go to www.sba.gov/e200. You can reach Mark S. Lee at mark@leegroupinnovation.com or go to www.leegroupinnovation.com.

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