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Street Entrepreneurs Awarded $175,000 by Mayor Bowser to Support DC's Inclusive Economy

The New City-Wide Accelerator Program Provides Nearly 1,000 Entrepreneurs with Access to Business Education, Mentorship, and Capital

(WASHINGTON, DC) – Mayor Muriel Bowser and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) awarded $175,000 from the Innovation Accelerator Grants to Street Entrepreneurs (SE). SE will use this grant to offer technical assistance, mentorship, and access to capital to its largest cohort to date.

"As we continue to build Washington, DC into the Capital of Inclusive Innovation, we are investing in the ideas and people that otherwise might not get the support they need to ensure success," said Mayor Bowser. "These grants bring us one step closer to ensuring all Washingtonians, including underrepresented entrepreneurs, are able to share in our city's continued prosperity and in turn create more opportunities for our residents."

Street Entrepreneurs envisions a grit-based economy where people with talent, drive, and hustle have access to the education, networks, and capital needed to sustainably solve the problems impacting their lives, their communities, and our world. SE believes that with so many challenges facing humanity, from climate change to bigotry, we do not have the luxury to prioritize because it is all urgent and vital. We must multiply our impact, and the most sustainable and scalable way to do this is to support entrepreneurs who are working to solve local problems and create economic mobility.

"A person experiencing a problem is always the best fit to solve it. Inequity has created a void of access and investment in under-leveraged markets. Hence, people experiencing some of the world's most challenging problems lack the power to design solutions, perpetuating a cycle of injustice. As a result, we focus on creating access by providing community, program scholarships, and childcare options for parents, as well as other interventions that remove barriers to entrepreneurship opportunities," said Juliana Cardona Mejia, Founder and CEO of Street Entrepreneurs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Street Entrepreneurs leverages the experiences of hundreds of local entrepreneurs who have participated in their program over the past four years to deliver hands-on business education. Their curriculum design incorporates design thinking, experimentation methodologies, and even improvisational comedy to teach skills critical to starting, operating, and scaling a business. SE's modules cover business ideation, sales, operations, finance, accounting, legal compliance, business structures, small business taxes, communications, and marketing. SE strives to be a "neighborhood accelerator" and a first stop-shop for

start-ups and small businesses. For increased location accessibility, the SE accelerator program will meet people where they are and tour community centers, libraries, incubators, and co-working spaces in all eight wards.

MENTORSHIP

Following each module, SE will host Talent Exchange Sessions through which participants will get matched to coaches (skill-based support) and mentors (industry experts). The Talent Exchange uses the Kiva Method, a facilitation technique developed by the indigenous people of Southwest Texas. The Kiva Method is an interactive and practical process that leverages participant experience to exchange knowledge and create peer-to-peer support networks.

“Street Entrepreneurs has been an incredible help in growing my business. This organization has built a community of dedicated and hard-working entrepreneurs and provides an atmosphere for networking and collaboration. Because of the education and workshops Street Entrepreneurs has provided, my business has grown substantially, and I am at a point of opening the first Sunstone Candles brick and mortar location, which will be in Union Station. The resources provided by SE are invaluable,” said Maddie Boening, Founder of Sunstone Candles.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

After completing the curriculum, SE participants will select top founders from across the city’s eight wards to pitch their companies to a panel of judges, angel investors, venture capitalists, and community supporters at *Street Pitch*. Street Pitch transforms the traditional pitch competition by utilizing peer-selection and mobilizing a collective of organizations to democratize who is involved, what they win, and how they are showcased. Through a nationwide network of partners, the showcase is live-streamed to the world, allowing viewers to vote with their money by directly investing in their favorite entrepreneur through crowdfunding campaigns, product purchases, and in-kind contributions.

“Street Pitch allowed me to present my high heel hell solution and share my story. Weeks later we went from a couple hundred followers to 20,000 followers on Instagram, and I was able to raise the money I wanted from local angel investors,” said Jazmine Davis, Founder of Jazmine Kionna.

Other awardees as part of Mayor Bowser’s initiative to increase access to business development and financial support for DC-based businesses led by underrepresented entrepreneurs include 2Gether-International and Cureate.

ABOUT STREET ENTREPRENEURS

Street Entrepreneurs is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that harnesses the power of small business and human ingenuity to create positive change. Their most recent cohort provided 32 pay-what-you-can interactive workshops to circa 400 entrepreneurs and showcased seven at Street Pitch.

An independent study conducted by Deloitte in 2019 found that the Street Entrepreneurs program enabled entrepreneurs to find new networks, suppliers, tangible resources, new marketing opportunities, and increased their sense of well-being. Street Entrepreneurs has also helped develop the local economy by creating a 38% growth in jobs from 2017 to 2018 for companies within the cohort. Further, 50% of graduates' companies experienced revenue growth from 2017 to 2018.

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Archived copy from the Street Entrepreneurs records (2015 to 2025). Contact details and expired links have been removed.