

Bronx Business Tech Center Incubator Report to the City Council for the period through July 1, 2021 – December 15, 2021

Table of Contents

Introduction

1. Grant-funded Programs:

- Tech Center program: Business Technology Mentorship.
- Digital skills training for small business employees (NYC Means Business: Training Your Employees).
- Upskilling initiative and Blackstone LaunchPad.
- AR/VR Unity Training.

2. Services

- The Small Business Development Center (SBDC).
- Bronx Business Tech Incubator membership waived in 2022.
- Appointing Business Liaison Manager to support the tech center clients.
- Bronx Business Council and Tech Center newsletter.
- Technology equipment.

3. Impact

4. Next Steps

- Bronx Business Tech Incubator (Tech Center)
- Tech Center concept paper.

Introduction

Lehman College School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS) is pleased to submit this report on the outcomes of the FY21 Council Funds to Create New Tech Incubators, for April, 2021 through December, 2021.

The Bronx Business Tech Center has supported economic development in the Bronx, in general, and its Incubator clients, in particular, in a variety of innovative ways since the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown began in March 2020. The Tech Center supported the nineteen businesses in the Tech Center Incubator through remote services (telephone, email or video conference) and is hoping to reopen three days per week beginning in January 2022 at no charge.

Currently CUNY on the Concourse is open three days per week for limited in-person allied health classes (Certified Nursing Assistant, medical assistant, pharmacy tech and dental assistant), some digital training programs, and Certified Nursing Assistant testing.

City Council funding for the Bronx Business Tech Center has enabled us to create a hub, which in turns has attracted multiple sources of grant funding which have increased the impact of the City Council allocation. The outcomes of the grant-funded programs are included in the report as an integral part of the overall impact of the Tech Center.

1. Grant-funded Programs:

- **Tech Center program: Business Technology Mentorship**

As reported in the report of April, 2021, the City Council funding allowed SCPS to leverage a one-year grant (\$100,000/year) from the Verizon Foundation to serve over 200 small businesses.

The Tech Center supported the Incubator clients and other NYC small businesses by offering a free Business Technology Mentorship program in emerging technologies. The 34-week program was offered to 10 cohorts of small businesses (comprising 2 cohorts in a CUNY college in each of the boroughs); Lehman's Tech Center was the lead agency.

Each college was home to either a Small Business Development Center or a technology incubator. Lehman's tech incubator is the only facility of its kind in both the CUNY system and the Bronx, which made the College uniquely qualified to develop, implement and over see this new technology program at the other four colleges.

Since its launch in October 2020 the program received 493 applications and was successfully completed on 11/3/2021 serving 214 businesses.

A cohort timeline:

Recruitment	Weeks 1-3
Orientation	Week 4
Training session 1	Week 5
Training session 2	Week 6
Training session 3	Week 7
Training session 4 (instruction & mentorship)	Week 8
Structured mentorship 1	Week 9
Structured mentorship 2	Week 10
Structured mentorship 3	Week 11
Unstructured Mentorship	Weeks 12-34

The business owners participated in 8 hours of technology training via live Zoom. The Tech Incubator developed the curriculum which was designed to attract small business owners who were veterans and/or minority-and women-owned businesses (MWBES). <https://www.lehman.edu/techincubator/training-for-small-business/>

See Appendix 1: Technology Mentorship Curriculum

The businesses were then paired with a volunteer/mentor group for 7 weekly structured mentorship sessions on topics such as technology, financing, digital marketing, competitive analysis, social media, website best practices, and e-commerce with additional on-call help available by phone, email, and text. The mentors were either Verizon employees or volunteers from NY Tech Alliance. Businesses continued meeting with their mentors as needed for 15 additional weeks.

Training outcomes from 214 businesses:

70% of businesses reported having some basic knowledge about how to use technology in their business pre-training. After the training, 98% reported that the overall training content was very good or good; 97% reported that they agree or somewhat agree (180/186 participant) that they acquired skills that would help them grow their businesses, most commonly by learning about emerging technologies and its impact on businesses and 184 out of 186 businesses reported that the program helped them expand their business.

Here are some examples of anonymous feedback from businesses about what they enjoyed most. For the complete feedback received from 167 businesses refer to Appendix 2 of this report:

"I really enjoyed how the sessions were broken down. I have a clearer understanding of my drivers and my assets, and I truly believe that this insight is going to help me to navigate the journey as an entrepreneur in a prosperous way"

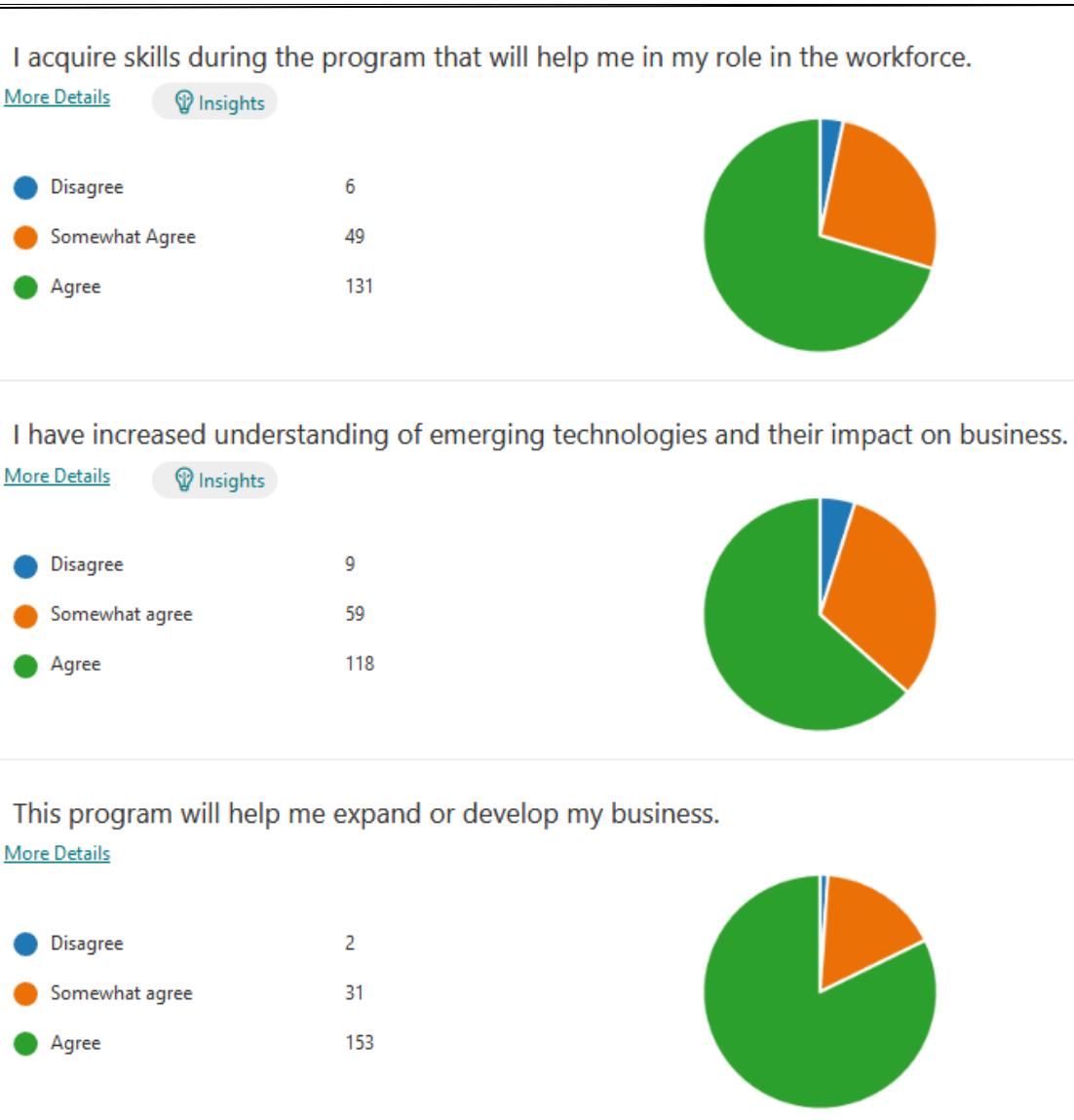
"The second week was a game changer. The topic on prioritizing your market by using triage was really appealing"

"I enjoyed learning from other businesses and challenges faced on day-to-day. Also, learning how to use technology for my business"

"Joseph was a really great instructor and I appreciate how he connected with each of us and cared about our business success"

"We have covered many aspects of how to improve online presence and ways to improve our site conversion through marketing. The atmosphere in the Cohort is very inclusive, and inviting, and I have enjoyed having intensive exchange of ideas, concepts, excellent presentations by Ariba, Ying, Kevin and Joe, and breakout sessions"

"Just knowing that I am on the right track with my business in what I need to focus on and do"



Mentorship outcomes from 214 businesses:

During the training participants learned to use technology to shift their business model to meet the needs of clients while finding new sources of revenue.

Businesses learned ways to assess current marketing needs and what technology solutions could help them meet their goals. To complement this knowledge, businesses were matched with a mentor in an organized mentorship group, where they were coached through the selection and implementation of these valuable technologies over a period of 3-6 months.

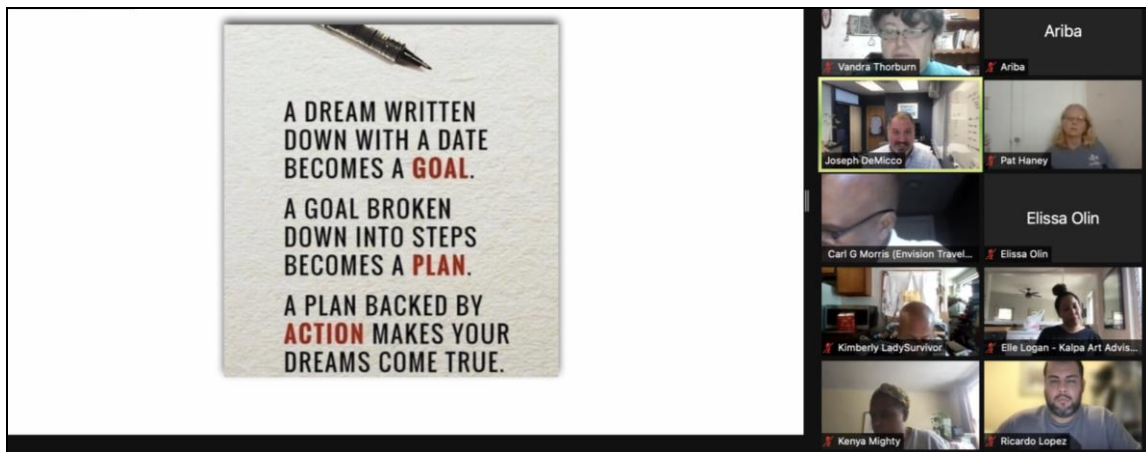
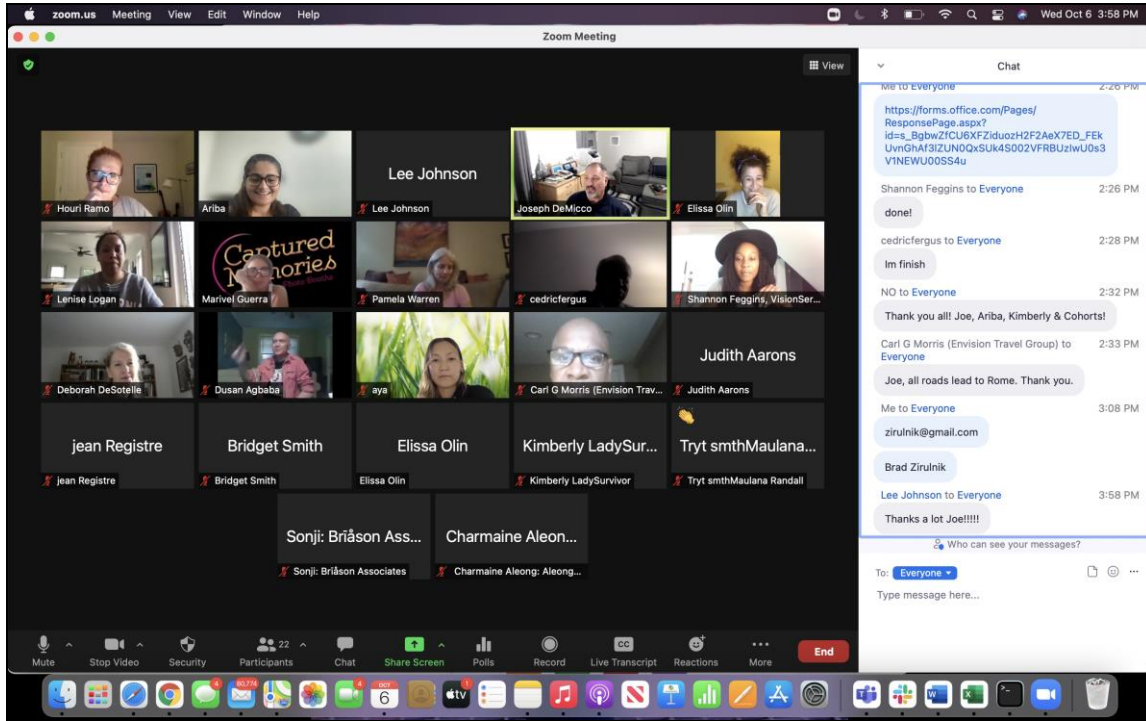
Appendix 3 contains detailed survey responses from 125/214 participants of the mentorship program. The majority gave overwhelmingly positive and encouraging feedback about the structured mentorship sessions.

For example, Larry Byrd, CEO and founder of “Fashion and Everything Else”, whose goal was to create a conduit for emerging designers, reported that his mentor has inspired him and provided a clear pathway to establish his business and to complete his business plan.

Examples of the impact of mentorships:

Anonymous: “My mentor and this program helped me by filling my head with information I didn’t have access to, such as market tools and free training courses to help further me in my business.”

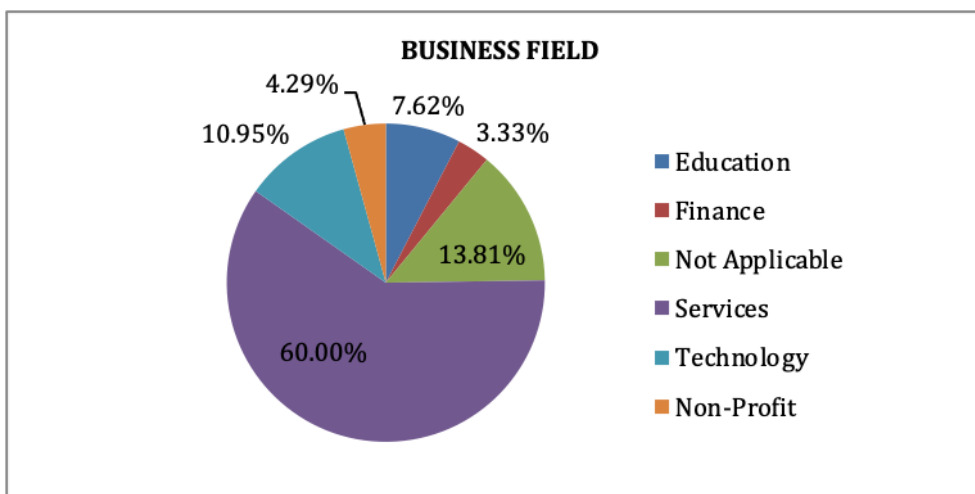
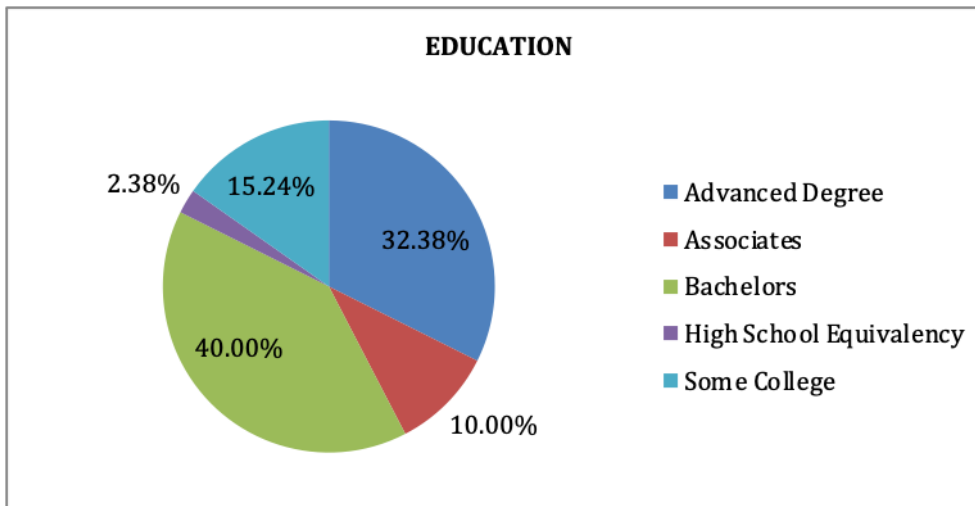
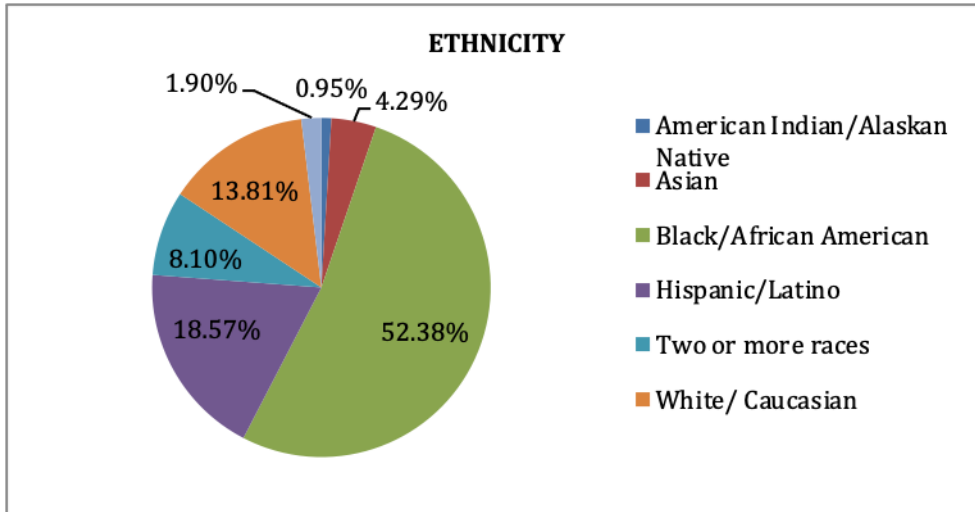
Vicente Navarro: “He guided us through assessing our ideas and implementation goals. His insight helped us see parts of our business plan that needed further thinking and development.”

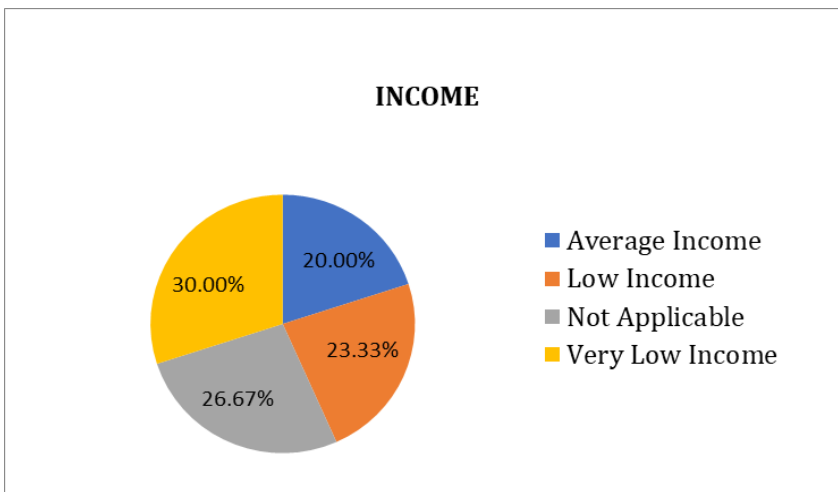
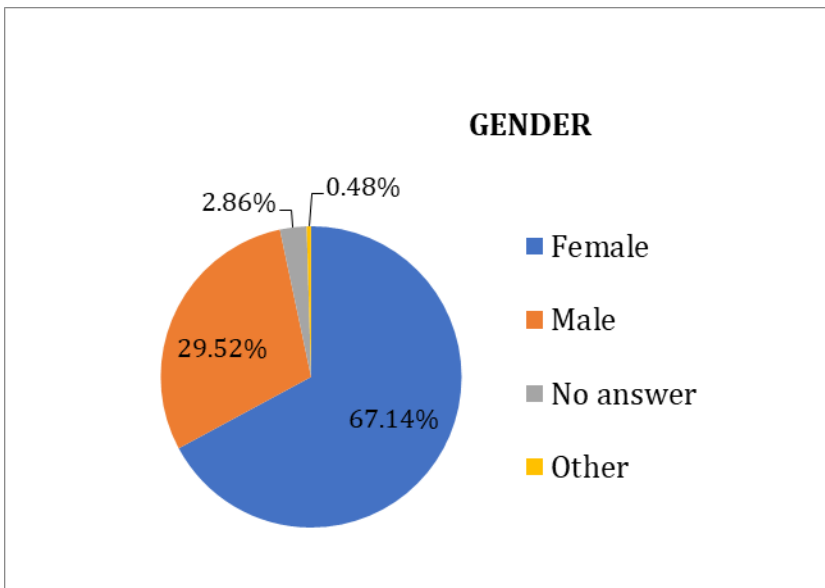
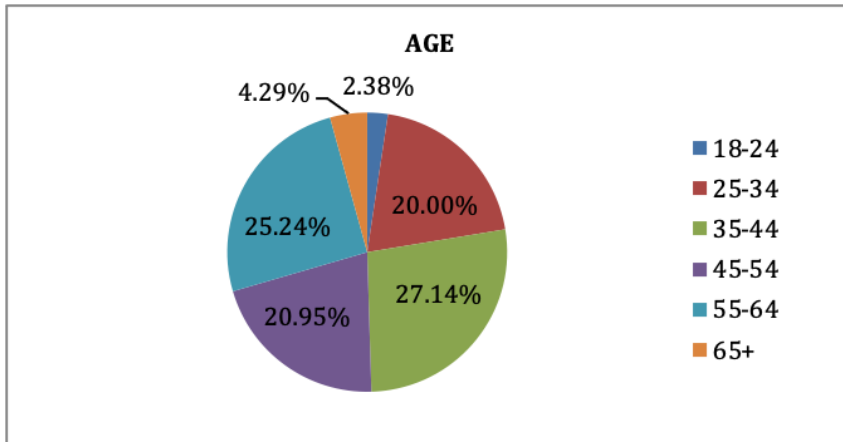


Sample survey response:

Business Owner Name:	Business goals:	Recent actions taken towards goal:	How has your mentorship group helped you work towards your goal?	How has your mentor helped you towards your goal?
Denice Martin-Thompson Business name: Dee's Passion Filled Experience, LLC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To master the art of advertising and marketing so that I can convert my visitors/leads to clients. 2. To have a solid presence on all my social media channels. 3. To learn more about SEO and how to use the analytics that my website provides. 4. To incorporate a financial bookkeeping system to keep track of my sales and spending. 5. To start back blogging consistently. 6. To start making consistent revenue for my business 	<p>Actions taken this far:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I created my business store on my website 2. I paid for my Vistaprint pro-advantage account so I can ship items directly from Vista to my clients 3. I started posting weekly to my social media accounts 4. I'm partnering with The NYC Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and will participate in their small business crawl next week. 5. I bought a business planner so I can separate my business notes from my creative notes. 	<p>My mentorship has planted seeds and ideas about how I can take my marketing and advertising to the next level.</p>	<p>Clara has offered strategic steps that I can take to begin marketing and advertising on the next level</p>

Participant demographics





- **Digital skills training for small business employees (“NYC Means Business: Training Your Employees”).**

This training program provides local business owners and their employees with digital literacy, marketing, and online technology skills to remain resilient during the pandemic and to recover as business improves.

<http://www.lehman.edu/techincubator/training-for-small-business/>

The tech center has laid out an agenda that focuses on accelerating digital investments in response to growing businesses needs, using new data to improve business operations, increasing technology capabilities to overcome pandemic restrictions, and increasing the abilities of businesses to grow.

Program timeline and goal:

Program was launched in January 2021 and is expected to be completed by June 2022. The program goal is to enroll a total of 400 incumbent workers from a maximum of 150 unique businesses so that businesses can be sustainable and grow in New York City and their employees will gain the skills to both support their employer’s success and to advance in their career. Four courses were offered in Spanish. In order to reach its goal, Lehman College is collecting the following data from the participants and will report the outcomes to the City Council in the next marking period.

- Status of the business;
- Number of employees retained;
- Number of employees hired; and
- Number of employees with wage increases.

Lehman College is offering four (4) hours of consultation per business: an initial meeting to create the training plan, a mid-point check-in, and a concluding meeting to ensure the successful implementation of training and to develop a cross-training plan.

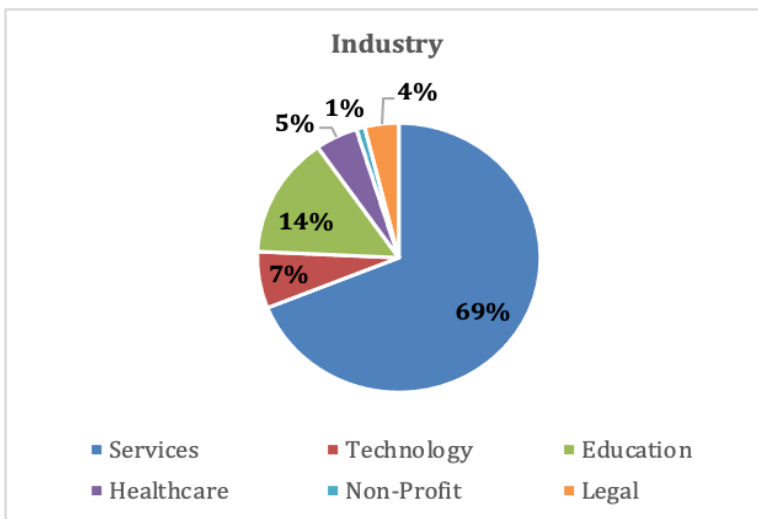
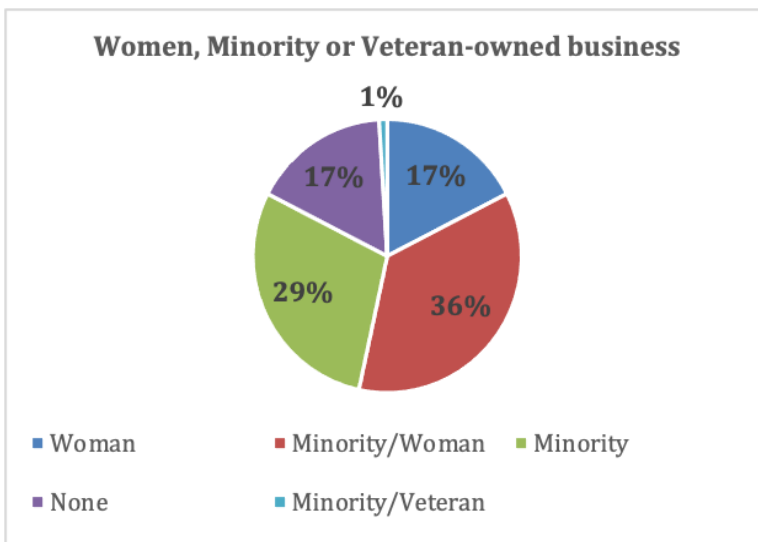
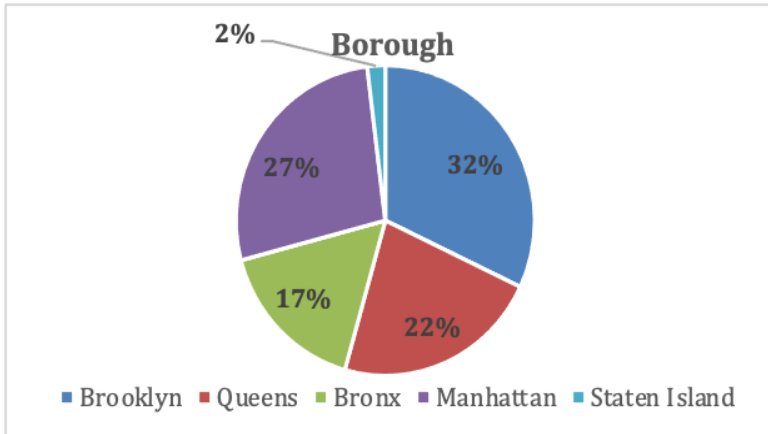
By the end of the training, businesses and their staff will have new and/or improved digital skillsets that will directly impact the business’ ability to stay in operation as well as provide employees with skills that will make them more successful and marketable in their current and future careers.

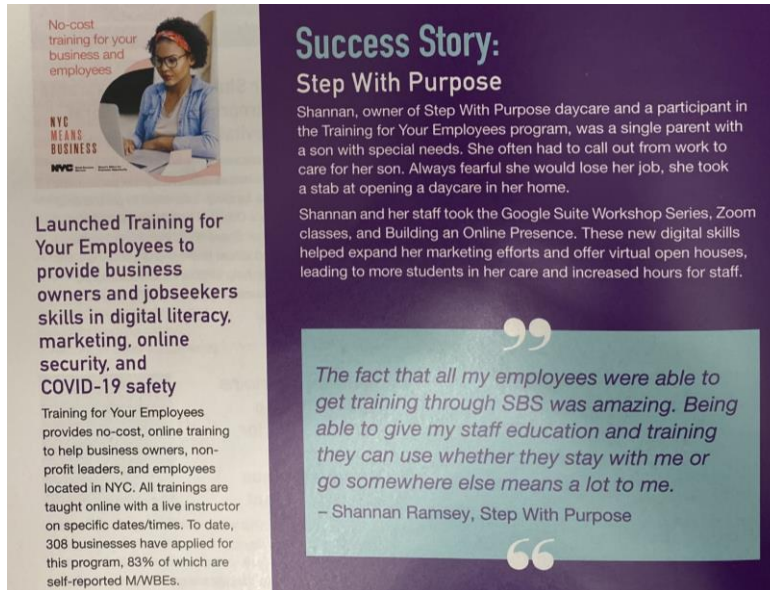
Participant counts Jan 21-Dec 21

Participation between Jan 21-Dec 21	
Total # of Business (headcount)	133
Total # of Trainees (headcount)	289
Total # of Trainees completed 1 or more courses (duplicated)	421

Courses/ participant count Jan 21-Dec 21	
Communication: Google Meet and Gmail	43
Document Creation: Google Docs, Sheets, Slides	31
QuickBooks	41
Shared Cloud Storage: Google Drive	32
Data Collection, Surveys and Analysis: Google Forms	29
Building an Online Presence	37
Finding New Customers Online	30
Create Your Own Website / Selling Your Product Online – BOC	21
Microsoft Excel 365: Part 1	30
Health and hygiene in a pandemic	6
Cloud Storage: Dropbox and Microsoft OneDrive	23
Microsoft Excel 365: Part 2	12
Scheduling and Managing Zoom Meetings (for Hosts)	9
Zoom Essentials	7
Microsoft PowerPoint 365	6
Microsoft Office 365 Basics	5
Payroll Fundamentals (Digital Payroll Using QuickBooks for Small Business)	6
Introduction to Microsoft Teams	17
Sp - Communication: Google Meet and Gmail	3
Microsoft Word 365: Part 1	5
Sp - Shared Cloud Storage: Google Drive	4
Sp - Document Creation: Google Docs, Sheets, Slides	4
Sp - Data Collection, Surveys and Analysis: Google Forms	3
Education: Google Classroom	5
Microsoft Outlook 365: Part 1	2
Computer Basics (Computer Essentials)	9
Microsoft Outlook 365: Part 2	1

Participant demographics





No-cost training for your business and employees

NYC MEANS BUSINESS

Launched Training for Your Employees to provide business owners and jobseekers skills in digital literacy, marketing, online security, and COVID-19 safety

Training for Your Employees provides no-cost, online training to help business owners, non-profit leaders, and employees located in NYC. All trainings are taught online with a live instructor on specific dates/times. To date, 308 businesses have applied for this program, 83% of which are self-reported M/WBEs.

Success Story: Step With Purpose

Shannan, owner of Step With Purpose daycare and a participant in the Training for Your Employees program, was a single parent with a son with special needs. She often had to call out from work to care for her son. Always fearful she would lose her job, she took a stab at opening a daycare in her home.

Shannan and her staff took the Google Suite Workshop Series, Zoom classes, and Building an Online Presence. These new digital skills helped expand her marketing efforts and offer virtual open houses, leading to more students in her care and increased hours for staff.

“The fact that all my employees were able to get training through SBS was amazing. Being able to give my staff education and training they can use whether they stay with me or go somewhere else means a lot to me.”

– Shannan Ramsey, Step With Purpose

Business Name: Step with Purpose, LLC

Owner/Contact Name: Shannan Ramsay

Business Industry: Daycare

Years in Operation: 16 Years- Business Started in 2005

Website: <https://www.stepwithpurposellc.com/>

of Employees: 5

of Employees Trained in this program: 5

How was their business affected by the pandemic?

Our business was affected by the pandemic in so many ways - We lost 60% of our children, and 10% of our staff. It was and still is scary times for us - we had to quickly learn how pivot our business, we had to learn how to promote and operate the business in so many ways that we were not ready for at first.

What courses did they/employees take?

- Google Suite Workshop Series
- Zoom Classes
- Building an Online Presence

Why was this program a success?

This program at Lehman college was priceless; it has given myself and my staff the confidence we need to successfully build the business. The class was so convenient; the teachers were amazing, and the staff was very patient and supportive. This class has allowed me to get the strength I needed to innovate new things like virtual learning, surveys, google slides, zoom interviews just to name a few. It's so hard competing with big companies when you own a small business so being able to give my staff lifelong skills meant a lot to me.

Outcomes: Was able to recruit 6 new children to the program as result of digital efforts which allowed existing staff to add back hours that were cut during the pandemic and the business to take on 2 summer interns. We are also hiring another employee part time.

- **Upskilling Initiative and Blackstone LaunchPad**

Thanks to the City Council funding, the Tech Center was able to support the Upskilling Initiative and the Blackstone LaunchPad, by providing resources and staff to collaborate with Lehman's Computer Science Department this spring, allowing students to take their skills to the next level.

Upskilling

This valuable program has provided free seven to ten-week Upskilling courses for small business owners, the community, Lehman College students, and alumni. The program prepares individuals for open positions in high industry growth areas such as IT, Data Analytics, Healthcare, Business Administration, and Cyber Security.

Upskilling covers up to 100% of tuition for course(s) applied for and approved. All Lehman College undergraduate students are eligible to take these one-credit courses. <http://www.lehmanupskilling.org/>

Program outcome:**Upskilling Data**

- 30% applicants unemployed
- 15% small business owners
- 79% held a college or professional degree
- 72% attendees were woman
- 51% campus attendees (Fall 2021)
- 49% community attendees (Fall 2021)
- 4.86/5 reported an overall satisfaction with the course (SPG/SUM 21)

Top 3 skill courses requested

- Entrepreneurial Skills
- Web Development
- Intro Project and Construction Management

Blackstone LaunchPad

The Blackstone LaunchPad is designed to teach entrepreneurial skill-building, foster entrepreneurial interest, help students create entrepreneurial networks and provide resources to enable students to create and build businesses.

Activities due date:**October 13-16**

Lawrence Fauntleroy, director of the Blackstone LaunchPad, represented Lehman College at the **GCEC Conference** (Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers) in Baltimore, Maryland. GCEC showcased higher education's role in the urgent movement to support underrepresented entrepreneurs who have been most impacted by the economic crisis and hold the most potential for recovery and growth.

November 12

Lehman's BLP hosted an **Ideas Competition**. Nine finalists competed virtually to pitch their ideas to a panel of industry judges, comprising:

Esmeralda Herrera, Director of programs and community relations, *Communitas America*

Malcolm Paul, Founder & CEO, *Ninjas in the Machine*

Darrell Bennett, Founder & CEO, *JOURNY*

Ideas came from three different tracks: Social & Climate Impact; General; and Consumer Products & Services. Two winners claimed \$1,000 each. The two Lehman finalists moved to the Network Round to compete for \$10,000 in prize money and expert consultation to further develop their idea.

Blackstone Launchpad Founders' Cohort

The Blackstone LaunchPad (BLP) cohort application rolled out on **Wednesday, December 29**. Twenty qualified students will be selected in late January, and the cohort starts in February 2022. The Young Ambitious Ones (YAO) Entrepreneurship Program (see attached) will manage the cohort from February to May 2022. In May 2022, the cohort will be prepared for a campus-wide pitch event and graduation.

Support Services

The Blackstone LaunchPad team at Lehman will manage all campus activities, such as, but not limited to, providing students with access to Startup Tree, organizing entrepreneurship panels and speaker series, networking events, and the entrepreneur competitions within the BLP network.

- Lawrence Fauntleroy, director
- Ashley Alvia, program coordinator
- Shany Lajara-Contreras, program and tech administrator
- Angel Morales, advisor and tech support

Uvii (www.uviiapp.com) will support day-to-day activities. Uvii (Universal Video Instructional Interface) is an education software company providing access to learning and evaluation on mobile devices using a patented sole source virtual collaboration method called Action Command Messaging (ACM) on our command-driven mobile app and online portal with real-time productivity data analytics.

Startup Tree and TalentLMS are interactive, online training platforms that will help students further develop their entrepreneurial skills. Startup Tree is a Blackstone product, which solves the pain point of managing a fragmented data

landscape into one centralized platform allowing the program to demonstrate true impact to stakeholders, donors, and sponsors. Startup Tree continuously provides opportunities to students' year-round to a network of over 100 institutions and directors committed to pursuing entrepreneurial collaborations and connections. Startup Tree centralizes data to reduce the reporting burden.

TalentLMS is another Blackstone product. TalentLMS is an online training platform that offers a series of short, fun and interactive modules focused on Entrepreneurial Skill Development. From tips on developing an entrepreneurial mindset to advice on building relationships and networking, the modules available through TalentLMS will help students immerse themselves in the world of entrepreneurship, even if they lack a business idea or are in startup mod. Students who complete all ten modules will receive a certification in recognition of their newly developed skills.

Appendix 7: The BlackStone LaunchPad Founders' Cohort

- **AR/VR Unity Training**

The Unity training, which was underwritten by a grant from EDC and delivered in partnership with NYU was discontinued when funding for the RLab ceased in June 2020 but has started up again subsidized by City Council funding. In collaboration with the Unity Technologies administration in the UK, several Unity courses, both introductory and preparing for the Unity Certified Game Developer certificate, have been offered remotely using zoom. These courses are intended to meet the continuing demand in the Bronx for AR/VR training and certification.

Appendix 8: Unity Training Curriculum

2. Services

- **The Small Business Development Center (SBDC).**

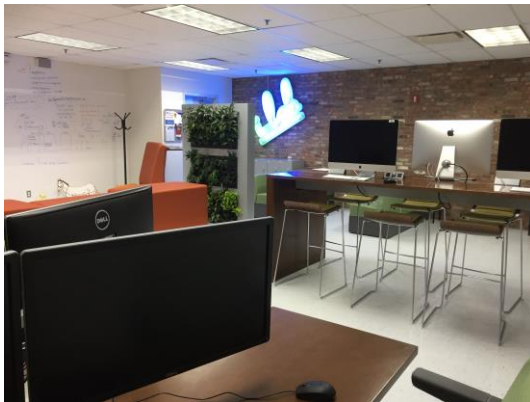
The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Lehman College School of Continuing and Professional Studies continued to collaborate closely with the Tech Center to support the local small businesses hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The mission of the SBDC is to support the businesses in order for them to stay open, to get through the difficult times and grow.

The SBDC supported the Tech Center clients with advice on business financing, government contracting, e-commerce/social media, grants and more (e.g., PPP, Shuttered Venues funding, etc.). They provided free business consulting, information about licensing, permit guidance, and the SBA Coronavirus Economic Injury Disaster Loan.

<https://www.bronxsbd.com/>

For this year January 1, 2021 through December 23, 2021 the Bronx SBDC at Lehman College:

- Provided one-on-one counseling to 466 new clients;
 - Had economic impact of \$19,601,622;
 - Demographic breakdown - 57% Black - 34% Hispanic 14% White. Females accounted for 56% of clients counseled;
 - Conducted 62 training events with 4,290 participants.
-
- **Bronx Business Tech Incubator membership fee waived in 2022**



We are pleased to announce that starting January 19th, 2022, the Bronx business Tech Incubator (BBTI) will be open to members 3 days per week, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, from 9AM-5PM, at no charge (pending any changes due to the Omicron variant). In 2022 BBTI's current members will have access to the facilities and services at CUNY on the Concourse when the facility is open.

<https://www.lehman.edu/techincubator/index.php>

Additionally, the Bronx Business Tech Incubator is accepting new applications from small businesses, again with no membership fee, to join the program. This unique opportunity is made possible through generous funding by NY City Council.

All members will have access to the Tech Center, the Business Incubator, the Conference room spaces, the front desk support, a dedicated mailbox, and a locker. Members will also receive business support from the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) business advisors and will be invited to all business workshops sponsored by SBDC and other Bronx community-based organizations such as BOC and BOEDC.

Weekly incubator newsletters provide up to date information about programs, services, workshops, grants and procurement opportunities.

- **Appointing Business Liaison Manager to support the tech center clients.**

The Small Business Consulting Practice (SBCP) has been on hiatus since before the pandemic. After two failed searches, a Business Liaison Manager has finally been identified and Andrea Huda, who is currently the director of professional programs at Baruch College, will start at the beginning of February. She will manage and oversee the Small Business Consulting Practice Program, which consists of training for Lehman students and an internship serving incubator clients and other small businesses. The overall purpose of the position is to identify and coordinate with small businesses, business professional associations and the certification agencies, to develop and introduce certificate programs to be offered for the Tech Center businesses, Lehman College students and the local community. Additionally, she will develop and promote business/employer partnering relationships to assist the Department of Economics and Business in identifying and providing experiential learning opportunities through internships as well as for curricula development. In fall 2022 Lehman's new School of Business will begin operations and the Business Liaison Manger will play a critical role in developing the program and acting as a link between the new school and the Bronx community.

- **Tech Center Newsletter**

The Tech Center continues to send the BBTI weekly online newsletter to 6,550 Bronx businesses on our mailing list to keep them informed about new grant and loan funding as it becomes available as well as training opportunities. This has been a source of critical information as the Bronx weathered the lockdown and prepared for economic recovery and is a source of much needed updates.

Appendix 4: BBTI newsletter data, BBTI Newsletters April-December 2021

- **Bronx Business Council**

The Tech Center continued to provide economic development agency leadership through the Bronx Business Council (BBC). The following organizations are members of the Council:

Bronx Business Council Partner Organizations
BOC, Business Outreach Center Network
Bronx Women's Business Resource Center
BOEDC, Bronx Overall Development Corp.
Bronx Chamber of Commerce
Fordham Road Business Improvement District BID
NYC Business Solutions
SoBro, South Bronx Overall Development Corp.
SoBro, Industrial Development Zone
Hostos Community College
Bronx Community College
Workforce Education Program, Lehman College
School of Continuing and Professional Studies, Lehman College
Small Business Development Center, Lehman College
CUNY on the Concourse Campus, Lehman College

Meetings of the Bronx Business Council were convened on September 22, 2021, and December 10, 2022, to share information and good practices and ensure that there are no gaps in services or unnecessary duplication.

Partners have been working closely with businesses in connecting them into procurement and funding opportunities. All partners reported that they have been helping small businesses across the borough with several relief options to help businesses and nonprofits organizations recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

Appendix 5: Bronx Business Council minutes of meeting/ agenda

- **Equipment for remote services**

The Tech Center purchased more technology equipment for remote services. The pandemic forced the Incubator to completely change its scale and mode of services as the entire college moved online and the city went into lockdown. This change necessitated the purchase and upgrade of equipment and a completely different, more labor-intensive approach to communication. By using the video conference system, Zoom, COTC managed communications internally and externally through Teams and underwent extensive training in order to remain operational.

The Tech Center is implementing “hot desk” equipment to make office space more flexible and efficient as the staff and the incubator businesses are preparing for a post-pandemic workplace. Adopting a hybrid model and rethinking the physical layout to address the shift in work modality is critical to safe reopening. The “hot desk” system will allow multiple employees and businesses to use the same space or workstation at different times, thereby enabling us to stagger space usage and allow greater social distance. The Tech Center is purchasing docking stations that will allow individuals to use their laptops to work just as well as a desktop computer as well as more laptops.

Another piece of technology that has been implemented at COTC and the Tech Center is CLEARED4, a cloud-based health verification platform that monitors and manages COVID-related safety and compliance. The Tech Center has put its resources into various trainings and workshops, as well as a card-swipe system, to ensure a safe return to the workplace for businesses, students, and staff. The CLEARED4 system has been in place since October 2021.

3. Impact

Programs		Budget
1	AR/VR Unity Training	\$42,000
2	Tech Incubator/ support services (e.g., personnel, newsletter, webinars, counseling)	\$295,000
3	Technology equipment and OTPS	\$45,000
Total		\$382,000

Programs		Outcome
1	Business Technology Mentorship	214
2	Digital skills training for small business employees	289
3	Upskilling initiative and Black stone LaunchPad	635
4	AR/VR Unity Training	33
5	The Small Business Development Center (SBDC)	4,756
6	Tech Incubator members	21
7	Bronx Business Council and Tech Center newsletter	6,550
Total		12,498

4. Next steps

- **Bronx Business Tech Incubator (Tech Center)**

Technology serves a variety of purposes and means different things to different people. Many Bronx residents need assistance navigating essential online activities to recover from the COVID pandemic, pursue education, employment, entrepreneurship goals, and navigate what is now everyday life.

Lehman's Bronx Business Tech Incubator can provide that assistance in the ways described above. Additionally, there has to be a re-imagining of the Tech Incubator in the post pandemic world. Incubator clients will be invited to convene to discuss their current and emerging requirements and suggest ways to increase the number of small businesses served. There is also a need to further update equipment and offer more training and support services to empower the Bronx Community to bounce back stronger while pursuing employment, education, and entrepreneurship.

- **Tech Center concept paper, Bronx Digital Empowerment Center**

CUNY on the Concourse (COTC) is a 26,000 square foot facility whose space could be maximized with minimal build-out and new computer equipment. Given COTC's existing amenities, which include WiFi, break rooms, computer and health labs it would not be difficult to create a Digital Empowerment Center, which would both prepare people for entry level training and offer the training.

Customized, digital skills training helps people acquire the digital (and other) skills needed to be part of the modern workforce, obtain higher-paying jobs, and access remote educational opportunities. Digital skills training can also provide the necessary skills to navigate day-to-day needs. For example, training in the use of basic email, personal accounting software (e.g., Quicken), online job portals (e.g., Indeed, ZipRecruiter, and JobList), government benefits portals (e.g., SSA, SNAP, etc. NYC unemployment) can help individuals gain a greater sense of self-confidence in this new tech world.

The Tech Center has the resources, expertise, and experience to lead digital inclusion efforts in the Bronx, for non-student and non-business residents, through a unique digital empowerment center at CUNY on the Concourse (COTC) as is already being done through the multiple grants which the city council funding has allowed us to leverage.

We propose an ambitious and scaled up digital inclusion/tech training program to serve Bronx residents. See Appendix 6- Bronx Empowerment center concept paper for more details.