

## Verizon Business Technology Mentorship Program

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/>

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.

*"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.

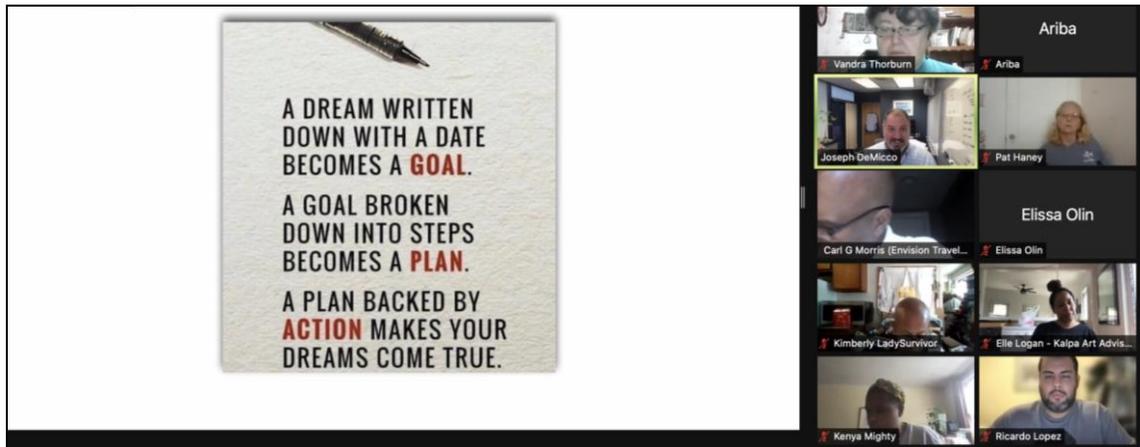
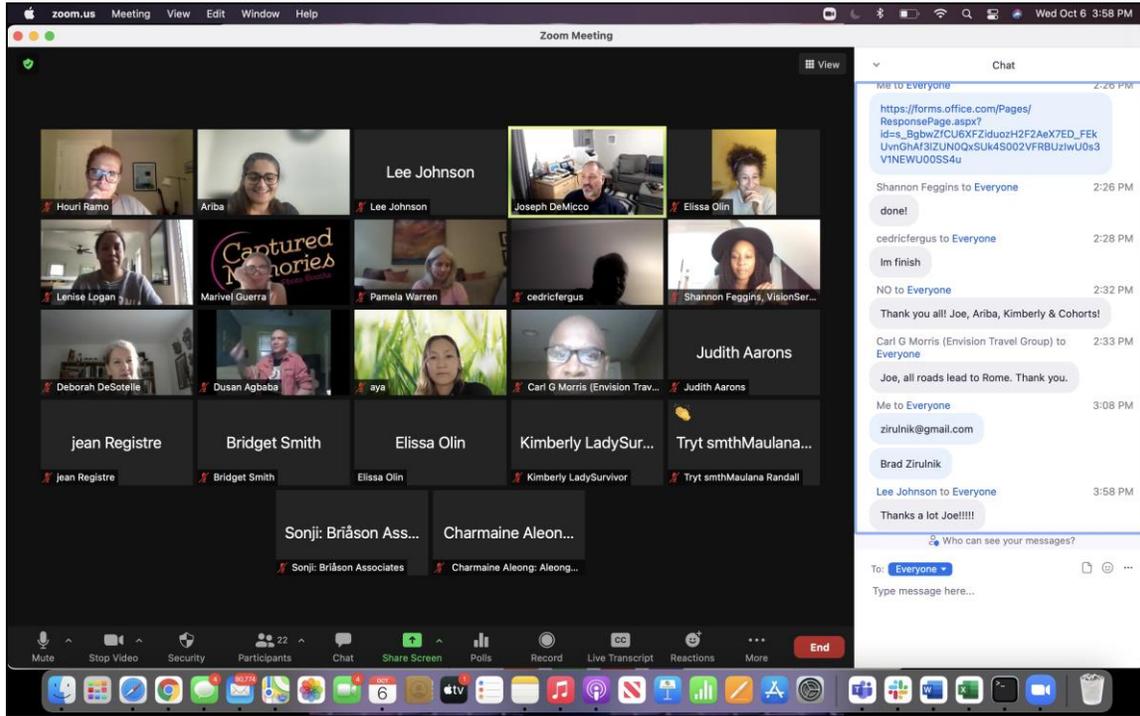
Appendix 3 contains detailed survey responses from 125/214 participants of the mentorship program. The majority gave overwhelmingly positive and encouraging feedback about the structured mentorship sessions.

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:**

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

**Participant demographics**

