

Bronx Business Tech Center Incubator Report to the City Council for the period through April 14, 2022

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Introduction

Lehman College School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS) is pleased to submit this report on the outcomes of the FY22 Council Funds to Create New Tech Incubators, for December 2021 through April 2022.

The Bronx Business Tech Center at CUNY on the Concourse has supported economic development in the Bronx, in general, and particularly its Incubator clients 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, and six new businesses in 2022, through remote services (telephone, email, or video conference) and in person as of April 2022.

In August 2020, CUNY on the Concourse (COTC) was the first Lehman facility opened for in-person classes after lockdown began on March 13, 2020. In preparation for the re-opening in early summer, 2020, when there was no approved re-opening policy and safety plan put in place by CUNY central office, COTC team developed a comprehensive safety plan to enable the essential healthcare skills classes to operate partially in person in early fall. This was essential so that students could finish their training, which required hands-on classes. The entire facility, including classrooms and labs, had to be re-designed and reconfigured to accommodate social distancing and CDC guidelines. The safety plan included constructing protection shields and designing and installing signs on the floor and walls. Disinfectant supplies and adequate PPT all had to be purchased. This was a huge undertaking since no one had ever before had to deal with a pandemic at a time when no one was vaccinated. In August 2020, CUNY central office approved the COTC plan, which met and exceeded the CUNY Guidelines, which were under development at that time. In addition to changes to the physical plant and operations, this partial reopening required COTC staff to learn how to manage COVID vaccine software, Cleared4, for non-credit students and the public to access COTC.

Starting August-September 2020, COTC opened two days per week for limited in-person allied health classes only (Certified Nursing Assistant, medical assistant, pharmacy tech and dental assistant) and CNA testing. As the city re-opened in Spring 2021, COTC opened one other day to accommodate more in-person classes. In fall, 2021, COTC's testing center opened, offering CLEP tests to the community and Lehman College degree students.

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

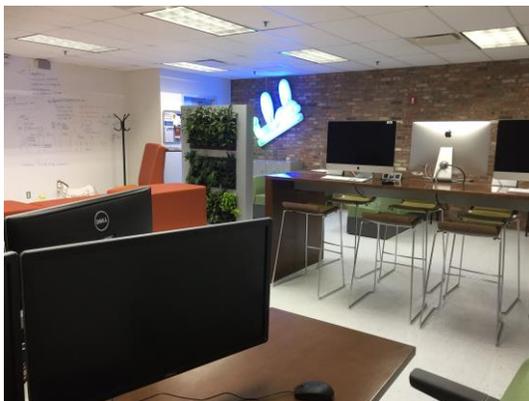
City Council funding for the Bronx Business Tech Center has enabled us to create a hub, which in turns has attracted multiple sources of grant funding which have increased the impact of the City Council allocation. The outcomes of the grant-funded programs are included in the report as an integral part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

1. Services

1.1. Bronx Business Tech Incubator space re-opening and success stories.

We are pleased to announce that starting April 20th, 2022, [the Bronx Business Tech Incubator \(BBTI\)](#) is open to members three days per week, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, from 9AM-5PM at no cost. BBTI's current and new members will not be charged a membership fee for using the facilities and services at CUNY on the Concourse. This unique opportunity is made possible through generous funding by NY City Council.

BBTI Members receive business support from Small Business Development Center (SBDC) business advisors, and are invited to business workshops, sponsored by SBDC, and other economic development agencies. Weekly incubator newsletters provide up-to-date information about programs, services, workshops, grants, and procurement opportunities and are sent to over 40,000 community residents.



The Bronx Business Tech Incubator is actively recruiting small businesses. In 2022 six new businesses joined BBTI.

	First Name	Last Name	Business name	website	Job title	Year company founded	Description of the business
1	Yafreicy	Brito	Kavod	-	consultant service	2020	Provide coaching service to clients about personal development and spirituality. Kavod helps clients do their inner work and set up boundaries.
2	Danyal	Sorel	Fortified Future Finance Inc.	https://www.fortifiedfuturefinance.com/	Founder, CEO	2019	The business provides financial literacy referrals.
3	Dawn	Rowe	Girl Vow	https://girlvow.org/	CEO	2015	A gender focused mentoring program for girls and gender expansive youth impacted by foster care, poverty, and juvenile justice.
4	Denis	Pena	Eisaa Foods Corp.	-	Manage	2021	Offers desserts or jams with a homemade style of Dominican origins. They also make a yucca arepa with cheese but sweet that is delicious.
5	Gregory	Pereira	FIRST STEPS - URBAN OUTREACH, INC.	www.ChildCareTrainings.com	CEO	2007	TRAINING & CERTIFICATION CENTER
6	Femi	Lewis	Femi Writes, LLC	http://femiwrites.com/	Content Coach and Creator	2021	Supporting service-based entrepreneurs in building an online presence with content strategy and development.

Brito Yafreicy is founder of Kavod, which was established in 2020. Kavod provides personal development and spirituality coaching services.

“My business is needed right now, there are so many people lost within themselves, struggling with anxiety and depression. I am currently working with minority women, helping them find a place and understand their emotions. My recent client has been dealing with anxiety for almost two years to the point of ending up in the emergency room several times. Her physical health is perfect, however, mentally she is not okay. We have discovered the main reason why she feels like that, and we are currently working on several tasks to overcome her anxiety attacks. I follow up with her every other day to check how she is doing and talk about her progress. Now she is doing so much better in every aspect of her life.”

The incubator space will help Brito to provide a much better service to her clients, she also needs business consulting to be able to grow and expand. Brito has an undergrad degree in Psychology and has always been known for helping people, serving as their mentor in difficult situations. She wants to help not only her clients but also many others to provide the resources needed for them to succeed.

Rowe Dawn is the CEO of [Girl Vow](#), a gender-focused mentoring program for girls and gender expansive youth impacted by foster care, poverty, and juvenile justice, which has provided services to over 3,000 people since 2015. Rowe has served many women and girls at the jail complex on Rikers Island, and she has supported women and girls impacted by sex trafficking, who have been hospitalized in psychiatric wards and helped restore them through higher education and workforce development.

Femi Lewis is the founder and Content Coach Creator at [Femi Writes, LLC](#). Her company supports service-based entrepreneurs in building an online presence with content strategy and development. *“My business is growing; I began as a sole proprietor in 2018 and became an LLC in 2021. During this time, I have assisted entrepreneurs in building content for social media, email marketing and website content. I am committed to not only building my business, but also supporting the good works of others in business.”*

Danyal Sorel is founder of [Fortified Future Finance Inc.](#) since 2019. The business provides financial literacy referrals at little to no cost to underserved communities to access a wealth of organized financial literacy resources, and effective financial literacy education tools, that otherwise would not be affordable to the public. Danyal navigated through different technological obstacles and fundraising challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Accessing Bronx Business Tech Incubator is an exciting partnership venture any business can benefit from. Fortified Future Finance Inc. (F.F.F. Inc.) is a nonprofit financial organization providing access to financial literacy, financial resources, and financial opportunities via systemic referral. We are honored and proud to participate and engage with the Bronx Business Tech Incubator at Lehman College, as one of our satellite locations, to achieve greater levels of success as a nonprofit organization working diligently in the financial sector.

Utilizing the valuable resources Lehman College has made available via the Bronx Business Tech Incubator program will allow businesses like us to grow exponentially, developing technical skills with access to resources that would otherwise be unattainable.

Bronx Business Tech Incubator enables businesses to take advantage of research/development tools/resources, conference/office space and remote virtual capabilities is an excellent opportunity. F.F.F. Inc. is honored to work with an incubator that has been strategically designed to advance and grow business. This will allow F.F.F. Inc. to conduct business with more consumers both strategically and technologically.

Free counseling services provided by SBDC and one-on-one business consulting building, developing Business Planning, Cash Flow Management, Financial Analysis, learning Internet Trade skills, assistance with Financial Planning, Credit Counseling, Loan Packaging, Marketing, and Strategic Planning via the Lehman College Tech Incubator program allows F.F.F. Inc. essential leverage to expand the scope of business, to expand vital vocational career skills and expertise thus benefiting the communities F.F.F. Inc. Serves.

The Bronx Business Tech Incubator empowers F.F.F. Inc. to develop economically, and F.F.F. Inc. via the incubator will create more pathways to financial success for F.F.F. Inc clients, thus the incubator program is supporting F.F.F. Inc. and other organizations to close the wealth gap by providing more equitable opportunities actualizing more equity within many communities.

BBTI New Business Success Story:

In 2007 Gregory & Milka decided to use their skills to open a day care center [First Steps Urban Outreach, Inc.](#) Gregory had been teaching a multitude of trainings including Health & Safety, CPR, and many other adult education offerings. They met in 1998 while providing services to homeless individuals and families.



“The Childcare Training Center is appreciative of The Bronx Business Tech Incubator program for assisting us to create jobs, train high quality employees and assist entrepreneurs in The Bronx. In this new economy, childcare has been a daunting concern for many. People need to go back to work, and childcare is a huge necessity. We address this desperate need.”

Gregory & Milka Pereira, have been teaching people from all backgrounds and educational levels to either open a home-based day care facility or work in one since 2008 under the Professional Development Program of SUNY, The State Offices of Child & Family Services and The Department of Health. They have serviced over 3,000 participants.

Then COVID-19 hit, and their business almost went under.

The Bronx Tech Incubator has had a significant impact on their business. Gregory states *“The Incubator taught us how to pivot and use technology, which we learned from the Verizon Mentorship Program. Also, we currently have our employees enrolled into the ‘No-cost Training for your Business and Its Employees Program’ through CUNY at Lehman College. “*

The technology they learned and implemented have increased their sales by 50%.

“We even had our website revamped by a connection we made through The Bronx Tech Incubator. We will continue to work with The Bronx Tech Incubator so that they can assist other MWBE businesses in their efforts to achieve success.”

1.2. 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.nysbdc.org/centers/centers.aspx?centid=52>

For this year January 1, 2021 through April, 2022 the Bronx SBDC at Lehman College:

- Provided one-on-one counseling to 741 new clients.
- Had economic impact of \$25,384,585.
- Demographic breakdown - 57% Black - 36% Hispanic 15% White. 53% of clients counseled were women.
- Conducted 62 training events with 4,290 participants.

1.3. Bronx Business Council and Tech Center newsletter.

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

A meeting of the Bronx Business Council was convened on March 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 to 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.

The Tech Center continues to send the BBTI weekly online newsletter to 40,000 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 1: BBTI newsletter data, BBTI Newsletters December-April 2021
- Appendix 2: Bronx Business Council minutes of meeting/ agenda

1.4. Technology equipment, HyFlex classrooms at CUNY on the Concourse

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

In an effort to provide students and businesses with more options to access high-quality education and work environment, CUNY on the Concourse and the Bronx Business Tech Incubator is pivoting to HyFlex classrooms and incubator in fall 2022.

A HyFlex course/workshop gives students and businesses the ability to choose to attend to the sessions either face-to-face or online (e.g., synchronous). The number of modalities available to students and businesses will vary from course to course. Students and businesses can move among available modalities from session to session at their discretion.

The plan is to upgrade the Bronx Business Tech Incubator, the A+ lab, AR/VR lab, a CNA lab, and a regular classroom as COTC priority rooms in the Summer, 2022. The rest of the COTC classrooms will be upgraded in the next phase. Equipment to be purchased and installed in these spaces:

- HD cameras with optional pan, tilt, and zoom options
- Microphones to capture the instructor and student voice
- Touch screen monitor with pen tool on the side of the monitor
- Document camera (that can also be used as a camera input)
- Updated podium control panel

1.5. Xenegrade: Bronx Business Tech Incubator NEW registration management application.

[XenDirect](#) is the maker of Xenegrade, which is a leading registration management application built for continuing education, workforce development, contract training, adult education, and similar educational programs. The School of Continuing and Professional Studies' Workforce Program, Adult Degree Program and the Bronx Business Tech Incubator are utilizing the new registration software solution to better track data, courses, foot traffic, and workshop registrations in summer, 2022. This technology also creates surveys, reports and evaluations.

2. Grant-funded Programs:

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

At the onset of the pandemic, it was apparent that many NYC (small) businesses and their employee's needed technical (digital literacy) and safety training to adapt and survive during the COVID-19 global pandemic. This training program provides local business owners and their employees, especially those hit hardest during the COVID-19 pandemic, free access to digital literacy, COVID-19 safety trainings, and consultative services that could improve their likelihood of staying in business.

Specifically, the training offered a rich array of courses to increase 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/>

Goals of the Program:

- Enroll 150 unique businesses
- Enroll 400 unique participants

Targeted businesses:

- Businesses in TRIE communities, hardest hit by COVID- 19 pandemic.
- MWBEs
- Businesses that could not access the Customized Training program because they are too small and/or do not have the administrative infrastructure.

Outcomes:

Since program launch, February 2021, applications received:

537 unique applications

- 497 (92%) English
- 36 (7%) Spanish
- 4 (1%) Chinese

Of the 133 businesses served to date:

- 83% are too small to access Customized Training
- 83% are self-identified MWBEs
- 68% are from TRIE communities
- 33% in Brooklyn
- 29% in Manhattan
- 20% in Queens
- 17% in Bronx
- 1% in Staten Island

Lehman conducted three consultations for each business:

- 1) An initial meeting to understand the business and create the training plan;
 - 2) A mid-point consultation to ensure everything is going as planned; and
 - 3) At the conclusion of training to ensure successful implementation of training and to develop a cross-training plan.
- 113 businesses have completed a training plan during the initial consultation.
 - 78 (69%) businesses have completed a mid-point consultation.
 - 36 (32%) businesses have completed a final consultation.

34 (30%) expressed they were struggling during their initial consultation

- 41% completed a final consultation; all have reported that they are no longer struggling
- 59% have not completed the final consultation

23 (20%) expressed they were growing or improving during their initial consultation

- 30% are still growing
- 9% are restructuring their business

- 61% have not completed the final consultation

56 (50%) expressed they were stable during their initial consultation

- 6% are struggling during the final consultation due to:
 - Fire damage to the business
 - Trainees were unable to absorb digital skills
- 8% are stable during the final consultation
- 13% reporting growth during the final consultation
- 73% have not completed the final consultation

Business Status:

104 (of 113) businesses moved forward with training after initial consultation.

Businesses with 9 or less employees

- 85 (82%) businesses
- 152 trainees
- 403 courses

Businesses with 10-49 employees

- 14 (13%) businesses
- 60 trainees
- 134 courses

Businesses with 50+ employees

- 5 (5%) businesses
- 71 trainees
- 124 courses

Enrollments to date

- 91 businesses have had an employee complete at least one course
- 202 employees/trainees have participated in at least one course

Participant counts Jan 21-April 2022

Participation between	
Total # of Business (headcount)	159
Total # of Trainees (headcount)	323
Total # of Trainees completed 1 or more courses (duplicated)	584

Courses/ participant count	
Communication: Google Meet and Gmail	70
Document Creation: Google Docs, Sheets, Slides	47
QuickBooks	56
Shared Cloud Storage: Google Drive	53
Data Collection, Surveys and Analysis: Google Forms	46
Building an Online Presence	63
Finding New Customers Online	61
Create Your Own Website / Selling Your Product Online - BOC	36
Microsoft Excel 365: Part 1	91
Health and hygiene in a pandemic	5
Cloud Storage: Dropbox and Microsoft OneDrive	27
Microsoft Excel 365: Part 2	30
Scheduling and Managing Zoom Meetings (for Hosts)	23
Zoom Essentials	19
Microsoft PowerPoint 365	8
Microsoft Office 365 Basics	7
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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	9
Microsoft Outlook 365: Part 1	16
Computer Basics (Computer Essentials)	9
Microsoft Outlook 365: Part 2	3

2.2. Small Business Internship Program (formerly Small Business Consulting Practice), supporting the tech center clients

This year SCPS took steps to restart the Small Business Consulting Practices program. Pre-pandemic the program successfully ran four cohorts in partnership with the Department of Business and Economics, which will become the School of Business as of fall 2022. The program has been paused since March 2020 due to the COVID19 pandemic. As a first step SCPS brought on a new Program Manager, Andrea Huda. Although new to the Lehman College community, Andrea has 15 years experience in the continuing education landscape and comes to Lehman College from Baruch College (CUNY) where she developed and managed many successful programs. Andrea started her tenure as the Small Business Internship Program Manager in mid-February and has defined short- and long-term goals to get the program up and running again. As part of the re-launch, the program name was changed to “Small Business Internship Program” to better convey the program’s mission. The curriculum was revamped to include topics key to small businesses; promotional materials and an application process were created and defined.

Additionally, the new Program Manager 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 Manager will play a critical role in developing the program and acting as a link between the new school and the Bronx community.

SCPS will re-launch and welcome the first cohort of students in summer 2022. Students will train for four weeks in their specialized topics and will then participate in small business internship in fall 2022. The next phase of the re-launch is to recruit the students and the small businesses. SCPS will be sending out customized communications to target populations, holding information sessions, and sharing with the Department of Business and Economics’ key stakeholders.

- Appendix 3: SBIP Flyer
- Appendix 4: SBIP Brochure

2.3. 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 and the community to take their skills to the next level.

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 outcomes:

Upskilling Data

The spring courses finished on mid-March, 2022. 228 community residents and Lehman College students enrolled to the program.

- From fall to spring 2022 (288) there was a 1% increase.
- 70% of attendees were women, a 2% decrease from fall 2021
- 29% of applicants are unemployed, a 1% decrease from fall 2021
- 24% small business owners, a 9% increase from fall 2021
- 80% held a college or professional degree, a 1% increase from fall 2021
- 27% Lehman College students, a 24% decrease from fall 2021
- 73% community attendees, a 24% increase from fall 2021

The 24% increase in community attendance is most impressive.

In addition to the courses reported in the December report, the Intro to Project & Construction Management course were rolled out this spring.

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.

The first cohort of 15 students started in February 2022. In December, Lehman ran its first Blackstone Ideas Competition, and our two winners had innovative ideas in literacy and blockchain technology. In addition, the cohort is receiving wrap-around services that will help create polished pitch decks and get the cohort "startup ready" for Pitch Day next month and future local and national entrepreneur competitions.

2.4. AR/VR Unity Training.

The Unity training (formerly EON), 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. The training 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.

2.5. Computer-based GED testing at CUNY on the Concourse

CUNY on the Concourse is expanding its testing portfolio by offering the GED test in April. The GED® test covers 4 subjects: Math, Science, Social Studies, and Reasoning Through Language Arts. Community prospects can take all 4 together or one at a time at COTC GED® test center. The test is free for NY residents.

3. Impact

Programs		Budget
1	Tech Incubator/ support services (e.g., personnel, instruction, program management, newsletter, webinars, counseling)	\$292,000
2	Technology equipment and OTPS	\$50,000
3	AR/VR Unity Training	\$40,000
Total		\$382,000

Programs January 1, 2021, through April 2022 (on-going programs)		Outcome
1	Digital skills training for small business employees	323
2	Upskilling initiative and Black stone LaunchPad	635+288+25
3	AR/VR Unity Training (December numbers)	33
4	The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) events	4,290
5	The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) new clients	741
6	Tech Incubator members	25
7	Bronx Business Council and Tech Center newsletter	5,833
Total		12,108

Programs December 1, 2021, through April 2022 (on-going programs)		Outcome
1	Digital skills training for small business employees	34
2	Upskilling initiative and Black stone LaunchPad	288+25
3	AR/VR Unity Training (December numbers)	33
4	The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) events	1,072
5	The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) new clients	185
6	Tech Incubator members	25
7	Bronx Business Council and Tech Center newsletter	3,833
Total		5,495

4. Next steps

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

Lehman's Bronx Business Tech Incubator provides assistance to Bronx residents needing help navigating essential online activities to recover from the COVID pandemic, pursuing education, preparing for and upgrading employment, meeting entrepreneurship goals, and navigating what is now everyday life. Adult students in programs preparing them for credentials benefit from the facilities and the people at the Tech . We are re-imagining the Tech Incubator in the post pandemic world and updating equipment to offer more training and support services to empower the Bronx Community to bounce back stronger while pursuing employment, education, and entrepreneurship.

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.

The Last Word

Special thanks to Lehman College, CUNY and the Bronx Business Tech Incubator program for fostering business development/succeeded by providing F.F.F. Inc. access to knowledge, advanced tools and resources designed to maintain technologically advanced capabilities."