

Filling the Gap: Supporting Minority Entrepreneurs in the Public Library

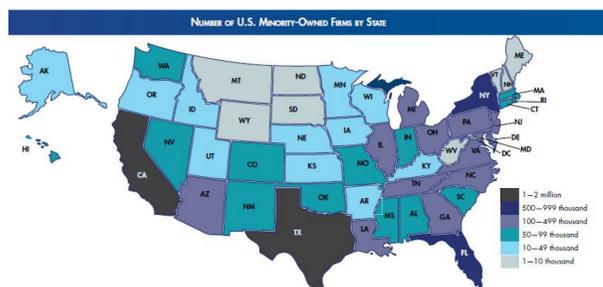
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BACKGROUND

According to the 2012 *Survey of Business Owners*, minority enterprise ownership is on the rise nationally. In 2012, there were 8 million minority enterprises with annual sales totaling 1.4 trillion dollars, up 38% since 2007.

(The Survey of Business Owners is released every 5 years and highlights characteristics of business owners in the United States. Data from 2017 is set to be released on September 2019).

	Black/African American	American Indian & Alaska Native	Asian	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander	All Minority Firms	Non-Minority Firms	Classifiable Firms*	All U.S. Firms
Number of firms	2,584,403	272,919	1,917,902	3,305,873	54,749	7,952,386	18,987,918	27,179,380	27,626,360
Combined gross receipts	\$150.2 billion	\$38.8 billion	\$699.5 billion	\$473.4 billion	\$8.1 billion	\$1.4 trillion	\$10.5 trillion	\$11.9 trillion	\$33.5 trillion
Average gross receipts	\$58,119	\$142,306	\$364,717	\$143,271	\$148,614	\$173,552	\$552,079	\$440,190	\$1,213,944
Number of firms with employees	109,137	26,179	481,026	287,501	4,706	908,800	4,156,683	5,136,203	5,424,458
Combined receipts of firms with employees	\$103.5 billion	\$31.7 billion	\$627.5 billion	\$380.0 billion	\$6.5 billion	\$1.2 trillion	\$9.7 trillion	\$11.0 trillion	\$32.5 trillion
Average receipts of firms with employees	\$947,905	\$1,209,143	\$1,304,571	\$1,321,717	\$1,374,831	\$1,227,983	\$2,337,043	\$2,134,765	\$5,990,509
Number of paid employees	975,052	208,178	3,572,577	2,329,553	39,001	7,165,151	48,255,649	56,058,563	115,249,007



Minority-owned firms still only make up 28% of all U.S. firms and face difficulties with:

- Building Professional Networks
- Receiving Effective Mentorship
- Access to Capital and Funding
- Digital and Business Education Divides

LIBRARIES

Despite rising rates of business ownership, minority entrepreneurs continue to face significant disparities when starting and growing a small business. Libraries are uniquely equipped to connect minority entrepreneurs with business communities, funding streams, and the information resources they need in order to succeed and grow. All Libraries are committed to providing:

- Information Expertise
- Subscription Resources
- Digital Access
- Building Community Connections

PROGRAMS

Programming plays an important role in welcoming new users to library services. Our business programs focused on introducing users to research resources, community services, startup basics, and funding avenues.

Our most successful programs focused upon active local sectors. We identified these sectors both statistically and anecdotally by noting growing interest from library patrons and reviewing data via Census Business Builder.



<https://www.census.gov/data/data-tools/cbb.html>



Highlighted Programs

Resources for Black Business Success

Hosted in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration, this workshop targeted African American entrepreneurs and business owners. Attendees learned about the one-on-one counseling and mentorship, training, small business loans, and technical assistance available for free through the SBA. Speakers touched on their micro-lending opportunities and the Minority-owned Enterprise Certification for government contracts.

Small Business Counseling for Women

Hosted in partnership with Chatham University's Center for Women's Entrepreneurship, this workshop targeted women interested in starting or expanding their business. Attendees met with counselors from their program to discuss business planning, marketing and sales, financing, and legal issues.

Other Successful Program Topics

- How to Start a Food Truck Business
- Crowdfunding Your Business with KIVA Zip
- Market Research Basics
- Small Business Research
- In-house and Off-site Consultations
- Small Business Resource Fairs



Rachel and Kristina hosting visiting Mongolian business librarians in partnership with Global Pittsburgh Pittsburgh, PA 2018

PARTNERSHIPS

By partnering with the organizations that support minority-owned businesses, libraries can develop stronger community ties with target users, and do more to strengthen local communities of color.



The U.S. Small Business Administration

A federal government agency that provides support to entrepreneurs and small businesses. They have district and regional offices in every state and a host of resources online including business plan templates. sba.gov



SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives)

SCORE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides free business mentoring services to prospective and established small business owners. They also offer workshops, printable resources, and speaker series. score.org

Partnerships with local incubators, makerspaces, SBDCs, chambers of commerce, community development corporations, and government agencies are essential to developing resources and services that meet entrepreneurs where they are.



Rachel and LaMonica at the annual Diversity Business Resource Center Fair Pittsburgh, PA 2016

Diversity Business Resource Center

A business resource center that provides a single point of contact for minority, women, veterans and other disadvantaged business owners seeking information to start, sustain and grow their business. dbrcpittsburgh.org/



ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Familiarize yourself with business language, concepts, and trends by consuming popular business media. **Reading & Listening Recommendations:**

- *Inc.*; *Entrepreneur*; *Fast Company*
- *How I Built This* podcast
- NPR's *Marketplace*
- *The Medium* - Entrepreneurship
- Local Newspaper Business Sections



Approach expanding services to minority entrepreneurs mindfully. Define goals to create equitable service and prepare to check in with team and users to refine and improve.

Find opportunities to build and define services to entrepreneurs within your library by partnering with government documents and career support specialists.

Focus on building meaningful relationships with library users instead of transactional ones.

Offer reciprocal services to your partners rather than just hosting them, so they will learn more about what you have to offer and refer more clients to you.

Invite diverse voices to the entrepreneurial experience by recruiting minority entrepreneurs and business owners to lead business and other programming.



LaMonica in-house consulting with a local entrepreneur. Pittsburgh, PA 2015

NEXT STEPS

Strengthen academic/public library partnerships by connecting with new business and entrepreneurship academic programs in order to bring theory into practice.

Partner with local academic libraries to increase access to subscription resources and bridge business education gaps.

Build networks and leverage library spaces as regular meeting spaces for minority business communities.

CONCLUSIONS

Public libraries are poised to be key partners in local minority-owned businesses' success. With research into business trends, and common information needs, librarians can prepare to meet entrepreneurs, define their value and offer information assistance at crucial moments in the startup process and throughout the life of any business.

