



Strengthening DeKalb: A Proposal to Sustain Small Business Initiatives

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April 1, 2024

Michelle Long Spears
DeKalb County Commissioner
District 2
1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, GA 30030

Dear Commissioner Spears,

I hope this letter finds you well. On behalf of the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, I would like to express our sincere gratitude for your support of our organization and our ongoing efforts to assist small businesses in DeKalb County.

Your dedication to the economic prosperity and well-being of our community is truly commendable, and we are incredibly grateful for your continued advocacy on behalf of small businesses. Your support enables us to fulfill our mission of empowering entrepreneurs, fostering innovation, and stimulating economic growth and development in DeKalb County.

We deeply appreciate your commitment to our organization and our shared vision for the future of DeKalb County. Your partnership and collaboration is important to us, and we look forward to continuing our work together to support our local small business community.

Once again, thank you for your support, Commissioner Spears. We are truly grateful for all that you do for the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce and for small businesses in our county. If you have any questions I can be reached at (470)-355-818 or via email at fatwater@dekalbchamber.org.

Frankie Atwater Sr., MPA, HDFP

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President and CEO
DeKalb Chamber of Commerce

A Proposal requesting support for the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce Small Businesses Initiatives

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce has continued to be a leader in providing resources, opportunities, advocacy, and connections for the business community in DeKalb County. To increase our feasibility in providing avenues for businesses to connect and benefit from opportunities offered through the Chamber, the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce is submitting this proposal requesting **\$25,000** in funding to continue our Small Business Initiatives. Funding will be used to assist small businesses owners with the essentials that are critical to maintaining a small business in DeKalb County.

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce has been at the forefront of advocating for local businesses, particularly small enterprises, for 85 years. Our mission is to foster an environment conducive to business growth and success, ultimately driving economic prosperity across DeKalb County.

With the current economic landscape presenting unprecedented challenges for small businesses, it is imperative that we enhance our efforts to provide them with the necessary support and resources to navigate these difficulties effectively. The requested funding will be allocated towards expanding and improving our existing initiatives tailored specifically for small businesses, thereby benefiting both DeKalb County and the broader business sector in several ways:

1. **Business Growth and Job Creation:** By providing small businesses with access to tailored counseling, mentorship, and training programs, we aim to empower them with the skills and knowledge needed to grow their businesses and create job opportunities within the community. Strengthening small businesses contributes to overall economic growth and prosperity in DeKalb County.
2. **Enhanced Competitiveness:** Through initiatives focused on providing small businesses with access to essential resources such as funding opportunities, networking events, and business development workshops, we will equip them with the tools necessary to remain competitive in today's market. Strengthening the competitiveness of local businesses benefits the entire business sector, driving innovation and fostering a dynamic economy.
3. **Community Engagement and Support:** Our programs and initiatives will foster greater community engagement and support for small businesses, creating a vibrant and interconnected business community in DeKalb County. By promoting collaboration and networking opportunities, we aim to build stronger relationships among businesses, residents, and local organizations, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of life in the county.
4. **Advocacy and Representation:** The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce will continue to advocate on behalf of small businesses at the local, state, and federal levels, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their interests are represented in policy decisions that affect them. Strengthening advocacy efforts benefits not only individual businesses but also the broader business sector, fostering a favorable regulatory environment conducive to business growth and success.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected small businesses in DeKalb County, presenting several significant challenges that continue to impact their operations and viability:

- **Financial Strain:** Many small businesses in DeKalb County have faced financial strain due to reduced revenue & increased expenses related to health and safety measures, and limited access to capital.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Small businesses in DeKalb County have encountered challenges related to supply chain disruptions, including delays in receiving inventory and materials, shortages of essential goods, and increased costs for sourcing products. These disruptions have hindered businesses' ability to fulfill customer orders and maintain consistent inventory levels, impacting their ability to meet market demand and generate revenue.
- **Shifts in Consumer Behavior:** The pandemic has prompted significant shifts in consumer behavior, including increased reliance on e-commerce and online shopping, preference for contactless payment methods, and changes in purchasing priorities. Small businesses in DeKalb County have had to adapt their marketing strategies, sales channels, and customer service practices to align with evolving consumer preferences and behaviors, which has required investment in technology and digital capabilities.
- **Workforce Challenges:** Small businesses in DeKalb County have faced workforce challenges, including difficulties in recruiting, and retaining employees, managing remote work arrangements, and ensuring workplace health and safety. The pandemic has also heightened concerns about employee well-being and mental health, requiring businesses to provide additional support and resources to their workforce.

Overall, the greatest issues impacting small businesses in DeKalb County after the COVID-19 pandemic revolve around financial strain, supply chain disruptions, shifts in consumer behavior, workforce challenges, and regulatory compliance. Addressing these challenges will require collaboration between businesses, government agencies, and community organizations to provide support, resources, and assistance to help small businesses recover and thrive in the post-pandemic environment.

Small Business Objectives

The proposed activities for the Chamber aim to provide support and resources to empower small businesses within the community. The continued initiative will focus on the following key activities and goals:

Business Development Workshops: Organizing workshops and training sessions to equip small business owners with essential skills and knowledge in areas such as marketing, finance, operations, and technology. The goal is to enhance the capacity of small businesses to innovate, grow, and succeed in today's competitive market.

Access to Funding Opportunities: Facilitating access to funding opportunities, grants, and loans for small businesses to support their growth and expansion initiatives. This includes providing assistance with grant applications, connecting businesses with financial institutions, and offering guidance on financial management and planning.



Networking Events: Hosting networking events, industry forums, and business mixers to foster connections and collaboration among small business owners, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders. The goal is to create a supportive ecosystem where businesses can exchange ideas, form partnerships, and explore new opportunities for growth and development.

Mentorship and Coaching Programs: Establishing mentorship and coaching programs to pair experienced business leaders with aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners. The goal is to provide mentorship, guidance, and advice to help small businesses navigate challenges, overcome obstacles, and achieve their goals.

Advocacy and Representation: Advocating on behalf of small businesses at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure their interests are represented in policy decisions, regulations, and legislative initiatives. The goal is to be a voice for small businesses, advocating for policies and programs that support their growth, sustainability, and success.

Overall, the proposed activities and goals for our combined initiatives to assist small business are designed to empower, foster entrepreneurship, and stimulate economic growth and development within the community. It is our mission to continue a conducive environment where small businesses can thrive and contribute to the prosperity of the local economy.

DEKALB CHAMBER SMALL BUSINESS INITIATIVES BUDGET

This budget provides a comprehensive overview of the proposed expenses for sustaining our small business initiatives and ensuring transparency and accountability in budget management.

Budget Period: January 2024 – December 2024

| Item | Description | Amount (\$) |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------|
| Personnel Costs | Salaries and wages for program staff | 5,000 |
| Program Development | Development and implementation of workshops, training materials, and resources | 5,000 |
| Marketing and Outreach | Promotional materials, advertising, and marketing campaigns to promote initiatives | 2,000 |
| Networking Events | Costs associated with hosting networking events, mixers, and industry forums | 2,000 |
| Mentorship and Coaching | Costs for establishing and maintaining mentorship and coaching | 4,000 |
| Advocacy and Representation | Costs for advocacy efforts, lobbying, and representation of small business interests | 2,000 |
| Administrative Expenses | Office supplies, equipment, utilities, and other administrative costs | 5,000 |
| Total | | 25,000 |

Notes:

All figures are estimates and subject to change based on actual expenses incurred during the budget period.

1. Personnel costs include salaries, wages, benefits, and payroll taxes for program staff dedicated to implementing and managing small business initiatives.



2. Program development costs cover expenses related to developing and delivering workshops, training materials, and resources to support small businesses.
3. Marketing and outreach expenses encompass promotional activities, advertising, and marketing campaigns to raise awareness and attract participants to Chamber small business initiatives.
4. Networking events include costs associated with hosting events such as venue rental, catering, and event logistics.
5. Mentorship and coaching programs include costs for establishing mentorship relationships, providing coaching services, and organizing mentorship events.
6. Advocacy and representation expenses cover costs associated with advocating for small business interests at the local, state, and federal levels.
7. Administrative expenses include office supplies, equipment, utilities, and other overhead costs associated with program administration.

CONCLUSION

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce has a decorated history of promoting and advocating for small business in DeKalb County. We are a 501c(6) organization recognized for our innovation, leadership, drive for excellence and talented employees. Over the past two years we have achieved every strategic objective and performance goal that we set out to achieve. By providing support, resources, and advocacy for small businesses, we drive to enhance our position as an organization that supports the interest of business and the economic stability of DeKalb County.

Through a combination of business development workshops, networking events, mentorship programs, and advocacy efforts, we will continue to provide a supportive ecosystem where small businesses can thrive and contribute to the long-term prosperity of our region. Together, we can build a vibrant and resilient small business community that drives innovation, creates jobs, and strengthens the economic fabric of DeKalb County for generations to come.