



City of
OAKLAND
California

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News from: **Economic & Workforce
Development Department**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Neighborhood Business Assistance Program Launches
following Successful Pilot**

Oakland, CA – Following a four-month pilot program, the City’s Economic & Workforce Development Department has rebranded and is officially launching a permanent business support program in Oakland’s neighborhoods. The newly named Neighborhood Business Assistance program has added a sixth location and opened appointment dates through June 2022. Appointments can be booked online at oaklandca.gov/BizHelp or by calling (510) 238-7398.

“Making this support available in the neighborhoods that small businesses call home bolsters the foundation of Oakland’s economy,” said Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. “Small businesses provide jobs and supply the goods and services our residents and visitors need while contributing to the character of our beloved city.”

With the demonstrated success of the pilot program, Business Development staff worked with the Library to secure locations through June and added a downtown location to give more options to entrepreneurs and business owners.

The six locations for the Neighborhood Business Assistance program are:

- 81st Avenue Library (every other Tuesday evening)
- César E. Chávez Library (every other Wednesday evening)
- Downtown’s Dalziel Building (every other Wednesday morning)
- Eastmont Library (every other Friday afternoon)
- Golden Gate Library (every other Thursday morning)
- West Oakland Library (every other Monday morning)

Neighborhood Business Assistance appointments continue to be by reservation only at oaklandca.gov/BizHelp. Just click the “Visit the scheduling page” link and select a location to view available times. Non-English speakers, those without Internet access, or anyone who needs assistance can also make an appointment by calling (510) 238-7398.

Reminder emails and text messages (when business owners provide a text-enabled phone number when making the appointment) will be sent automatically.

“Direct technical assistance and service provider referrals are core functions of our small business support efforts as we work toward an equitable economic recovery,” said Alexa Jeffress, Director of Economic & Workforce Development.

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Through staff and partnerships with business support organizations, we offer in-person assistance in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Assistance in other languages will be provided using the City's over-the-phone interpretation service.

During the appointments, staff are able to share information and provide referrals on available loans and grants; connect entrepreneurs with partners providing start-up support; offer insight on and navigation through the City's business permitting process; and assist with other common questions and challenges. Additional support and information may be provided via phone or email following the initial appointment.

Pilot Program Success

From September through December 2021, City staff held free, one-on-one, 30-minute appointments for entrepreneurs and business owners at five neighborhood libraries (West Oakland, 81st Avenue, César E. Chávez, Golden Gate and Eastmont). These locations were selected based on suitability of available City facilities, anticipated interest within the business community, and equitable access for previously under-served neighborhoods.

The pilot program allowed staff to gather data (i.e., number of appointments made, number of clients served, which locations served the most business owners, etc.), gauge interest within the business community, and learn City resource needs for a year-round program.

A customer satisfaction survey went out to all participating businesses in November 2021 to evaluate the Remote BAC Pilot Program. As of November, total appointments booked were 64; actual appointments totaled 53 with a no-show rate of 17.1%. More than 26 hours of direct service were provided. Of the survey respondents, 80% identified as African American, 60% identified as female, and 90% were Oakland residents. Overall, the satisfaction rating was 4.3 out of 5.

The top two performing sites (Eastmont – 28.3% of bookings and 81st Avenue – 22.64% of bookings) were libraries in East Oakland.

Demographics gathered through the survey demonstrate the program reached and served our intended audiences of entrepreneurs and business owners who identify as BIPOC and women. By making appointments available in the neighborhoods, we are delivering services in areas of East Oakland and West Oakland that historically saw underinvestment and alleviating digital barriers by offering in-person assistance rather than virtual support.

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