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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR &  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Alexa Jeffress,  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Neighborhood Business Assistance  
Program Update

**DATE:** February 1, 2022

City Administrator  
Approval

Date: Feb 2, 2022

### INFORMATION

In an effort to bring City business services to the community, EWD's Business Development division staff launched the Remote BAC (Business Assistance Center) pilot in September 2021 ([see Information Memorandum dated September 13, 2021](#)). This information memo will share the evaluation of the pilot program, its rebranding to the Neighborhood Business Assistance program and tools to help you inform your constituents.

Direct technical assistance and service provider referrals delivered through this program are core functions of our Business Development Division and support our work toward an equitable economic recovery.

#### **Evaluation of the Remote BAC Pilot Program**

From September through December 2021, City staff held free, one-on-one appointments for entrepreneurs and business owners at five neighborhood libraries. Thirty-minute appointments were available at:

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

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 81<sup>st</sup> Avenue – 22.64% of bookings) were libraries in East Oakland.

Demographics gathered through the survey demonstrate that the program reached the intended audiences of entrepreneurs and business owners who identify as BIPOC and women. By making appointments available in the neighborhoods, we can deliver services in historically under-invested areas of East Oakland and West Oakland and address digital barriers by offering in-person rather than virtual support.

### **Launch of Neighborhood Business Assistance**

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

In January, the pilot program was rebranded to the Neighborhood Business Assistance program with appointment dates through the end of June 2022 available at [www.oaklandca.gov/bizhelp](http://www.oaklandca.gov/bizhelp).

The six locations for the Neighborhood Business Assistance program are:

- 81<sup>st</sup> 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](http://oaklandca.gov/BizHelp). Business owners 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. Scheduled appointments maximize limited City staff resources, prevent queuing by business owners to save them time and keep everyone safer during the pandemic.

The scheduling platform is Bookings, part of the City's Microsoft 365 platform and integrates with staff's individual calendars. Reminder emails and text messages (when business owners provide a text-enabled phone number when making the appointment) will be sent automatically.

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.

As part of the rebranding, a [promotional rack card in six languages](#) has been produced, distributed at participating branch libraries and will be distributed to Oakland's extensive business support network.

In the next two weeks, we will distribute a media release on the program, add retractable banner signage at the six locations, and continue promotional efforts to inform entrepreneurs and business owners about this important neighborhood-based resource.

As the Neighborhood Business Assistance continues through 2022, Business Development staff will monitor appointment bookings and add additional days if a location becomes fully booked. We will also track the staff time required for follow-up actions to gauge whether additional staff resources are needed.

### **Tools to Inform your Constituents**

Please consider taking the following steps to help inform your constituents of the Neighborhood Business Assistance program:

- 1.) Amplify the City's social media posts via your respective social media accounts.
  - a. [Twitter](#)
  - b. [Facebook](#)
  - c. [LinkedIn](#)
- 2.) Include an announcement of the launch of the Neighborhood Business Assistance program in your newsletter to constituents.
- 3.) Distribute printed flyers at upcoming in-person events that you host

Special thanks to the Oakland Public Library staff whose continued support and accommodation allow us to reach entrepreneurs and business owners in neighborhoods throughout the city.

Respectfully submitted,



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ALEXA JEFFRESS

Director, Economic & Workforce Development  
Department

For questions, please contact Harry Hamilton, Marketing Coordinator, at (510) 238-6766.

