

- **WRITE THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION** (limit focus to one subject or action item, more than one recommendation may be needed to address a particular learning):**

To foster a culture of entrepreneurialism, Athens must support training programs for low-income adults and remove barriers to growth for start-ups and existing small businesses in Athens-Clarke County.

- **Identify any research, or other kinds of information that was used to craft this recommendation.** (add additional sheets as necessary)

Entrepreneurs and low-income Athenians who do not know that they could be entrepreneurs need out-reach, on-going business support/training, and access to capital. The committee recognizes that many potential entrepreneurs are not able to be successful- due to a lack of time, capital, belief-in-self, English language skills, computer training, or literacy- to access current resources. The committee recognizes that many entrepreneurs who have already begun their businesses fail due to a similar set of problems (e.g. lack of capital) that commonly affect small businesses. We understand that there are multiple ways for Athens policy to support small businesses through zoning, taxes, and permitting. The committee recognizes that there are several organizations (e.g., EADC, Goodwill Industries, SBDC) which have undertaken foundational work on these needs by providing business training, access to capital, and technical assistance.

- **Identify additional research or information that could help clarify this committee recommendation. List potential sources if possible.**

Research needed and possible sources:

- A. Work with existing agencies to obtain figures from the past 3 – 5 years
 1. ACC new business licenses
 2. EADC, SBDC, Goodwill number of training participants, how many of these started a business, how many sustained their business over the next several years.
 3. Are there surveys or should we survey for entrepreneurs’ hindsight and ongoing needs. Can the data obtained in phase one of the EADC Entrepreneur Friendly Designation application be used for our target population.
 4. Is there a way to identify our target population (low to moderate income prospective or new entrepreneurs)?
- B. Are there Business Incubator programs elsewhere that target poverty areas and people? Can we access their information? The NBIA (National Business Incubator Association) is a resource for this information. Do we have local resources to conduct a Business Incubator Feasibility study?

- **Indicate people or groups that we need to talk to help clarify this committee recommendation. List any recommended locations.**

- A. ACC Human and Economic Development Department, EADC, SBDC, Goodwill Industries, local educational institutions are sources of information. This information should include whether the agency (e.g., EADC) would be interested and capable of expanding services if additional funding should become available.

- B. Business incubator feasibility expert – local and or national through NBIA.
- C. ACC Human & Economic Development office for information on funding sources
- D. ACC Administrator who could address issues of hiring additional personnel to assist low income entrepreneurs with accessing and abiding by legal, permitting, zoning, tax, signage requirements; and/or to assist with language translation.

- **What kind of action or resources would be necessary to implement the recommendation?**

Funding for Existing Services: Due to a reduction in funding service providers (SBDC, EADC, etc.) there are fewer business development consultants, less financial support for local training programs, and smaller pools of capital. Funding needs to be increased.

Identify and Fund Needed Services:

- Incubators:^[U1] Create an Incubator so that several small businesses can work together, share a building or space, share information, equipment, liability insurance; have visits from accountants, IT, “case manager.” Could money come from TADs? Could an incubator become self sustaining?
- Bilingual Consultant: Goodwill Industries’ staff is Atlanta based. SBDC’s consultant works for the whole state and is very busy. There is a need for help with translating business plans into English to get a loan, and a need for help navigating the permitting process. Thus, hire and train several part-time or full-time consultants/entrepreneurs interpreters.
- Fast-track Identification of Potential Entrepreneurs: Some program needs to be created to aggressively engage potential entrepreneurs, create a user friendly process that recruits people who are not accessing SBDC or other local resources- create fast-track process to overcome their barriers to starting businesses^[U2]
- SWAT Team/Mentoring Program:
 - Have a “case manager” who can work with each businesses start-up and pull in resources as needed
 - Create SWAT Team of professionals- accountant, attorney, business professional- to have routine check in with small businesses
 - Stream line education package with common problems/pitfalls (cash flow, accounting, etc.)
 - Offer an apprenticeship/mentor program
 - Start a Small Business support group- acct, tax, real es^[U3] for one meeting a month, education on with-holding taxes

Access to Capital/Community Investing:

- Education and Engagement program to get local Banks focused on supporting small businesses- look at SBA Express Loans-New Markets
- Look into creating a Local Stock Market where investors can put money into local businesses
- Venture Capital Fund

Zoning, Tax, Permitting Issues:

- Need an advocate- someone to help navigate zoning restrictions.

- Need support with local ordinances like signage.
- Need help with the permitting process.
- Could something be done about the high cost of property taxes on inventory?
- Business Occupation tax- business license is expensive if you have more than one employee- may be able to reduce fees?- could the business license and business occupation tax be graduated over the first 3 years of business.
- On the issue of federal taxes on a businesses profits- need education on what can be done to help profits be reinvested in small businesses
- Could businesses have a homestead exemption tax if they own the building?
- Want solutions that don't just re-distribute the tax burden
- Does ACC have a checklist of required permits and rules for all startups?

Business Friendly Designation: Support Athens Clarke County's bid for Business Friendly Designation from the Georgia Department of Economic Development

- **Indicate what forces and influences are likely to occur that will support or oppose implementation.**

Forces that support (please list):

- A. Positive community attitudes and leadership for antipoverty initiative
- B. Programs are already in existence (e.g., EADC) which address training and financing of low income entrepreneurs and these can be utilized for information, for expansion. That is, these programs provide an excellent foundation for our recommendations.
- C. Technical help for developing programs (e.g., incubator) might be locally available.

Forces that oppose (please list):

- A. Initial enthusiasm and funding could change if political or social climate changes away from concern with anti poverty initiatives.
- B. Larger businesses or investors who are well capitalized could see an opportunity for profit and present a competitive obstacle for smaller, microbusinesses; and/or, utilize training and support resources designated for microbusinesses.
- C. Additional ACC employees who are designated for support to microbusiness entrepreneurs might be used for targets other than antipoverty initiative goal.