



Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab Introduction

Vision

The Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab partners – Allies for Community Business, Chicago Community Trust, and our funders – believe that entrepreneurs from any background can start and grow businesses that create generational wealth for their families and communities.

Mission

NEL provides the capital, coaching, and collaboration entrepreneurs need to grow great businesses in their communities.

Strategies and Roles

NEL pairs community business owners with investors, advisors, project strategists, community liaisons, and corporate liaisons who provide intensive support for nine months to help execute a growth initiative for each business. A4CB invites each NEL participant based on previous success in running or supporting a small business.

Every participant must contribute to the success of the community businesses in the Lab:

- The community business owners propose the growth initiative they wish to execute and owns the results of the Lab
- A4CB carefully selects the Lab participants, creates the nine-month content sequence, and manages the cohort overall
- The investors contribute to a pool of funds from which each entrepreneur receives a \$20,000 grant to support the growth initiative
- The project advisors offer introductions to influential contacts within their personal networks, and oversee a small group of entrepreneurs and strategists who work together to execute the chosen growth initiatives
- Each project strategist serves as the primary consultant for the business project of one entrepreneur participating in the Lab
- The community liaisons help A4CB identify potential business owners for the Lab, prepare selected community businesses, and encourage Lab participants to find additional resources for community businesses
- The corporate liaisons help A4CB identify potential project strategists, match corporate procurement needs to NEL businesses who can supply those goods and services locally, and provide grant funds to support the program
- Lab supporters connect A4CB leadership to community business owners, investors, advisors, strategists, community liaisons, and corporate liaisons that could potentially participate in future Labs.

The entire team holds each other accountable for the success of the business throughout the Lab and beyond.



Goals

By the end of each nine-month Lab:

- Each community business owner will launch his or her growth initiative and apply early lessons from the initial experience
- Each advisor will create at least two valuable business connections for the community business owners in the Lab
- All participants will rate the experience as at least a 9 on a 10-point scale

Two years after the Lab concludes:

- Each community business owner will have increased profits by at least 20% relative to the year during which the Lab began
- Each investor, advisor, strategist, and liaison will have referred at least two people that A4CB has then selected to participate in at least one Lab

Sample Successes Thus Far

- Melissa Villanueva purchased a coffee shop, Brewpoint Coffee. Through capital borrowed and the \$20,000 NEL capital grant, she has grown Brewpoint to three locations in less than five years. Melissa has given back by serving as a coach for other entrepreneurs and giving gourmet coffee to healthcare workers.
- Pamela Jones started Charboy's International House of Sauces and Seasonings, with a family barbecue sauce recipe. She improved and experimented with the recipe to lower sodium and sugars. Through the NEL coaching and \$20,000 grant, as well as borrowed capital, she has been able to build capacity to meet the larger purchasing orders with major retailers such as Jewel, Kroger, Mariano's and Whole Foods.
- Regine Rousseau's Shall We Wine business is an enterprise specializing in craft spirits and boutique wines which conducts in-store demos at Chicago area premier retail locations, and also organizes corporate and private wine tasting events. The \$20,000 NEL grant and coaching helped her grow her business, and she is now working with 200 contractors for events and demos throughout Illinois.



Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab
Role Description: Community Business Owner

Organization and Program

Allies for Community Business believes that entrepreneurs from any background can start and grow businesses that create wealth for their families and communities. A4CB provides the capital, coaching, and collaboration entrepreneurs need to grow great businesses in their communities.

The Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab (NEL) is an invite-only cohort-based coaching program that pairs community business owners with investors, Advisors, and Strategists who provide intensive project support and accountability as well as introductions to influential contacts within their personal networks. In addition, each entrepreneur receives a \$20,000 grant to grow his or her business. We will launch the sixth cohort in the fall of 2021. A4CB has developed NEL in partnership with The Chicago Community Trust and lead donor-advisors.

Position: Community Business Owner

Each NEL community business owner will design a growth project, and then work closely with a project advisor and project strategist to execute their business project. The business owner will prepare carefully for the Lab, push hard with the assigned advisor and strategist to execute the launch of the growth project, and seek out additional ways to learn and grow as a business owner.

Essential Duties

- Design an initial growth project for your business
- Complete all required pre-Lab preparation as agreed with A4CB, including clean financials and a clear business plan
- Reach all of the monthly milestones you establish with your team to successfully complete your project
- Invest at least four hours per month with your project strategist and advisor
- Remain current on all curriculum materials throughout the program
- Attend at least 90% of all Lab discussions, which will typically take place monthly and require 60-90 minutes

Qualifications

- At least two years of experience running a profitable business
- Skillful in business planning, budgeting, and project execution
- Openness to constructive assistance from advisors from different industries and backgrounds



Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab

Role Description: Advisor

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Position: Advisor

Each NEL Advisor serves as the primary leader for 4-5 pairs of community business owners and project strategists to help the entrepreneurs execute their business projects. The advisor listens carefully to what the community business owners in the small group are attempting to achieve, asks thoughtful questions to help shape the project plans, and provides ongoing guidance for the entrepreneur/strategist teams.

Essential Duties

- Participate in a two-hour pre-cohort training for small business acumen and cultural competency
- Prepare to serve your paired community business owners and project strategists effectively prior to the beginning of the cohort by reviewing materials about the businesses that NEL staff will provide
- Visit the businesses you are supporting at least once early in the process to learn more about the entrepreneur's on-site operations, staff, and customers
- Help business owners define and then reach the monthly milestones the entrepreneur must reach to successfully complete his or her Lab project
- Invest at least four hours per month to assist the entrepreneurs to whom you are assigned
- Speak at least once per month (and frequently more often) with each assigned Project Strategist to understand progress and challenges with the execution of the entrepreneurs' business plans
- Connect at least one contact in your personal network to each business owner with whom you are working, to help with the growth plan
- Remain current on all curriculum materials throughout the program
- Attend at least 90% of all Lab discussions, which typically happen monthly for 60-90 minutes
- Recruit and help train at least one additional project advisor for the next cohort
- Perform other duties flexibly and creatively as needs arise

Qualifications

- Strong belief in A4CB's vision and mission



- Skillful in business planning, budgeting, and project execution
- Experience with volunteering in group settings



Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab

Role Description: Project Strategist

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Position: Project Strategist

Each NEL Project Strategist serves as the primary consultant for the business project that one entrepreneur is seeking to execute within the Lab. The Strategist listens carefully to what the paired community business owner is attempting to achieve, asks thoughtful questions that will help shape the project plan, and provides ongoing execution support as the entrepreneur requires.

Essential Duties

- Participate in a two-hour pre-cohort training for small business acumen, Lab structure, and cultural competency
- Prepare to serve your paired community business effectively prior to the beginning of the cohort by reviewing materials about that business that NEL staff will provide
- Visit the business you are supporting at least once early in the process to learn more about the entrepreneur's on-site operations, staff, and customers
- Help business owners define and then reach the monthly milestones the entrepreneur must reach to successfully complete his or her Lab project
- Invest at least four hours per month to assist the entrepreneur to whom you are assigned
- Speak at least once per month (and frequently more often) with the assigned Project Advisor to communicate progress and challenges with the execution of your entrepreneur's business plan
- Provide monthly updates to the A4CB lead for the Lab
- Remain current on all curriculum materials throughout the program
- Attend at least 90% of all Lab discussions, which will typically take place monthly for 60-90 minutes
- Recruit and help train at least two additional project strategists for the next cohort
- Perform other duties flexibly and creatively as needs arise

Qualifications

- Strong belief in A4CB's vision and mission
- Skillful in business planning, budgeting, and project execution



- Experience with volunteering in group setting



Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab

Role Description: Community Liaison

Organization and Program

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Position: Community Liaison

The Community Liaison helps A4CB develop pre-program training, identify potential businesses for the Lab, prepare community businesses for the Lab, and encourage the other Lab participants to find additional resources for community businesses. Each NEL Community Liaison serves as the primary local resource for the entrepreneurs living and working in the community of focus.

Essential Duties

- Help design and lead the pre-program training
- Source 10-15 business annually that will participate in pre-NEL incubator programming
- Invite 5-10 NEL-ready businesses to apply for the upcoming NEL cohort
- Participate in a two-hour pre-cohort training for small business acumen, Lab structure, and cultural competency
- Prepare to serve business owners effectively prior to the beginning of the cohort by reviewing materials about that business that NEL staff will provide
- Help business owners define and then reach the monthly milestones the entrepreneur must reach to successfully complete his or her Lab project
- Partner with Advisors and Project Strategists as they work with entrepreneurs within their teams
- Coordinate monthly with the A4CB lead for the Lab on the progress of each of the entrepreneurs
- Remain current on all curriculum materials throughout the program
- Attend at least 90% of all Lab discussions, which will typically take place monthly and require 60-90 minutes
- Perform other duties flexibly and creatively as needs arise

Qualifications

- Strong belief in A4CB's vision and mission
- Deep understanding of the individuals, business owners and partners most active within the community of focus



Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab
Role Description: Corporate Liaison

Organization and Program

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Position: Corporate Liaison

Each NEL corporate liaison identifies experienced employees who might serve as project strategists, seeks opportunities to diversify corporate procurement to include NEL businesses who can supply those goods and services locally, and provides grant funding for the program.

Essential Duties

- Identify at least 5 experienced employees who A4CB can evaluate for service as project strategists
- Offers at least 2 contracting opportunities for \$100K in net spend to NEL community businesses
- Provides at least \$20K in grant funding for the program

Qualifications

- Strong belief in A4CB's vision and mission
- Openness to continuous discussion on how we can improve the long-term relationship between the corporation and A4CB as we seek to serve more community businesses



Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Lab
Role Description: Lab Supporter

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Position: Lab Supporter

Lab supporters connect A4CB leadership to community business owners, investors, advisors, strategists, community liaisons, and corporate liaisons that could potentially participate in future Labs.

Essential Duties

- Identify at least 5 individuals each year that A4CB can evaluate for roles in upcoming Labs
- Attend at least 1 Lab event during each cohort
- Provide a meaningful financial contribution to the program, with a suggested amount of \$20K

Qualifications

- Strong belief in A4CB's vision and mission
- Creative thinking towards how to connect thoughtful and skillful people to the community businesses who participate in the Lab