



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

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**Agenda Item Number:** 4

**Agenda Date:** November 23, 2021

**In Control:** Economic and Workforce Development Committee Meeting

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**DEPARTMENT:** Economic Development Department

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Brenda Hicks-Sorensen

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:**

Briefing on Launch SA

**SUMMARY:**

This is a briefing on Launch SA, an entrepreneurship and small business resource center, implemented in partnership with LiftFund.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

In November 2013, City Council authorized a professional services agreement with LiftFund for the operation and management of Launch SA, which includes both a virtual and physical location where entrepreneurs gather, collaborate, and learn more about entrepreneurship and small business resources.

This initiative was the result of a taskforce of business owners and advocacy organizations that convened in 2012 to brainstorm methods and strategies for promoting small and new business

growth in San Antonio. The taskforce identified the need to establish a culture of entrepreneurship throughout the San Antonio community, as well as an increase in coaching and mentoring opportunities for future and existing small business owners. The value of existing resources was also highlighted during the taskforce discussions as well as the need for increased marketing of these resources. The development of Café Commerce, rebranded in 2016 as Launch SA, was recommended as a mechanism by which to implement these types of programs. The taskforce further recommended the outsourcing of operations and management of Launch SA to promote an organic and innovation-focused approach to service delivery. Thus, the City sought a partner in a small business microlending non-profit organization Liftfund to further develop, implement and manage Launch SA. Launch SA has been housed at the Central Library; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Launch SA was temporarily displaced by staff from the Emergency Housing Assistance Program. Currently all Launch SA assistance is virtual with some opportunities for in-person consultations as requested.

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Launch SA helped support the COVID-19 Community Recovery and Resiliency Plan by serving as a hub, or virtual clearing house of information and resources, for entrepreneurs and small business owners. Launch SA also developed training for various small business outreach teams, such as San Antonio Growth on the Eastside, Prosper West, and Southside First, to ensure they effectively engaged with businesses and were fully aware of available resources.

In September 2018, City Council authorized the first five -year renewal option at \$800,000 total, or \$160,000 annually.

## **ISSUE:**

Since Launch SA was opened in June 2014, the entrepreneur and small business resource center has engaged in partnerships with community business resources and established programming to form a culture of entrepreneurship and help small businesses grow. Launch SA serves as a central location for information and provides specialty programming, workshops, and tailored resources such as:

- 1 Million Cups and Pitch Tab are similar programs that allow local entrepreneurs an opportunity to present their business ideas to a diverse audience of fellow entrepreneurs, advisors, and mentors via live presentation with audience feedback and questions.
- Break Fast & Launch is a nationally-recognized culinary business accelerator that works one-on-one with entrepreneurs and startups in the culinary industry to provide accounting, marketing, real estate, and business plan assistance to increase the sustainability of new restaurants, food trucks, bars, and related culinary ventures.
- San Antonio Entrepreneurship Week (SAEW) inspires individuals to take the leap toward entrepreneurship by providing education and highlighting various entrepreneurial resources in the San Antonio community. The event showcases various topics, including elevating entrepreneurs, creative culture, social equity, culinary, innovation, and community.
- ImpulSA is a Spanish business accelerator pilot program for established businesses in San Antonio.

- HELM is an accelerator program developed for entrepreneurs to understand growth and find resiliency through an ever-changing market. Through an 8-week cohort program, existing business owners are able to create relationships with peers, and learn growth strategies for their business.
- Mentor Roundtables are hour-long mentor driven conversations about business tactics and strategies. Topics are selected based on member needs and feedback.
- Venture Challenge encourages and supports entrepreneurs to create and achieve personalized business milestones in hopes of being awarded funding during a pitch competition, as well as furthering the entrepreneur's team, product, and company.

Since 2014, Launch SA has documented more than 14,500 unique walk-ins, hosted more than 5,600 events, and assisted 37,000 community residents. In its first five-year impact report, Launch SA clients surveyed indicated their sales had increased by 64%. In addition, they secured more than \$4.5 million of investments and generated more than 1,000 jobs with the help of services provided by Launch SA. In addition, a 2018 economic impact analysis was conducted on the Launch SA program and the study showed that for every \$1 invested in the program by partners there is a \$63 economic output for San Antonio's economy.

Additionally, Launch SA established an advisory board of successful entrepreneurs, which provides guidance regarding the strategic vision for Launch SA and feedback on building community involvement, delivering relevant programming and services, and strengthening the impact of Launch SA in San Antonio.

In FY 2022, Launch SA is focused on increasing support for the community by implementing a hybrid service model, continuing its virtual programming that emerged during the pandemic and relaunching in-person events and education. This includes the anticipated return to the Launch SA space located at the Central Library. Additionally Launch SA expects that with the launch of the new web-based intake platform developed in partnership with IRYS and the Economic Development Department, entrepreneurs and small business owners will be able to navigate the small business support ecosystem more easily along with continued collaboration with local and regional partners to support individuals referred to Launch SA for assistance and support.

In total, for FY 2022 Launch SA will support over 1,800 individuals in the pursuit of the start or growth of their businesses. Further, Launch SA will serve small business owners in expanding their businesses, with a goal of 10% of clients reporting increased revenues. Additionally, Launch SA has a target goal to assist clients in securing \$750,000 in capital support via loans, grants, and other self-reported funds raised.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

This item is for briefing purposes only.