



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**  
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**Agenda Item Number:** 3

**Agenda Date:** February 27, 2024

**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, the front door to small business and entrepreneur support in San Antonio.

**SUMMARY:**

This briefing will provide an update on the status of Launch SA located at the Central Library under the current Professional Services Agreement with Geekdom, LC. The briefing includes information on plans to serve small businesses and entrepreneurs under Geekdom's operations and updates on space and technology improvements funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

In 2012, Mayor Julian Castro convened a taskforce of business owners and business advocacy organizations for the purpose of creating a method or strategy to promote small and new business growth in San Antonio. The taskforce recommended the establishment of a "small business one-stop" to provide entrepreneurship education, mentoring, and serve as a resource and referral clearinghouse for business information. In 2013, City Council awarded a Professional Services

Agreement for the operations of then Café Commerce SA (later rebranded to Launch SA) to ACCION-Texas (later rebranded to LiftFund).

Since its inception, Launch SA has made a significant impact on the business community in San Antonio. It has documented over 14,500 unique walk-ins, hosted 5,600 events, and assisted more than 37,000 clients. The program has surveyed its clients, who reported a 64% increase in sales, secured \$4.5 million in investments, and generated over 1,000 jobs. Launch SA has played a vital role in supporting the community, serving as a business hub, and providing information and resources to entrepreneurs and small business owners.

After City Council approved the Economic Development Department’s (EDD) Strategic Framework in October 2022, EDD recognized an opportunity to re-imagine Launch SA to align with those strategies and to position it to serve as a leader for a strengthened small business ecosystem. With the Professional Services Agreement with LiftFund set to expire in September 2023, EDD issued a Request for Proposal on May 12, 2023. Subsequently, Geekdom, LC was recommended for the awarded Professional Services Agreement, and City Council approved a three-year professional services agreement with Geekdom, LC to manage and operate Launch SA on September 14, 2023 for a total amount of \$1,743,668. This contract includes options for two, two-year renewals.

In the first quarter of FY 2024 (October-December 2023), Geekdom, LC has provided technical assistance to 130 businesses, hosted four network events and two workshops as well as hired the positions of Launch SA Director and Entrance and Space Coordinator, two of four total positions.

**ISSUE:**

Geekdom, LC is in the process of scaling up its operations according to its first-year Strategic Plan. This plan lays out a pathway for transforming and refocusing Launch SA’s role in the entrepreneurial landscape of San Antonio, including changes to programming, fundraising, and marketing. With changes to programming and operations, Launch SA will be better positioned as a leader of the small business services ecosystem and front door to all of San Antonio’s small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. Geekdom, LC’s scope of work includes the following annual goals and outputs:

Goals	Objectives
Space Activation & Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct 35 workshops</li> <li>• Host working space and meetings</li> </ul>
Ecosystem Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer technical assistance services to support and guide 90 small business owners and entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Act as a connector to other ecosystem partners</li> <li>• Provide more than 150 hours of mentor meetings</li> <li>• Maintain the ecosystem mapping tool procured by the City</li> </ul>

Goals	Objectives
Education & Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a proposal that includes regular education and programming opportunities</li> </ul>
Funding Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect 20 small business owners and entrepreneurs to funding opportunities and financial advisors</li> <li>• Identify access to capital barriers</li> </ul>
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a plan to regularly promote the Launch SA brand, events, success stories in social media channels.</li> </ul>

Geekdom, LC will be responsible for tracking additional target and performance metrics, including demographic data, attendance per workshop, number of jobs created and retained, types of assistance provided, total capital raised, and amount of capital infused into small businesses. In addition, Geekdom will be collecting and evaluating service rating via client Net Promoter Score. EDD, in coordination with Geekdom, LC is leading improvements and upgrades funded by \$300,000 in FY 2024 ARPA funds, as included in the ARPA Small Business Implementation Plan approved by City Council in June 2022.

This work will include technology and furniture upgrades, creative transformations of offices and its conference room to facilitate collaboration and workshops, and a brand refresh. Renovations are scheduled to begin this spring and be completed during summer. A grand opening celebration will be held after construction completion to celebrate the re-launch of Launch SA.

**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.