

DETROIT ELEVATE

Powered by Gilbert Family Foundation

Detroit Elevate supports second-stage businesses in Detroit, Hamtramck, and Highland Park by providing access to resources, capital, and technical assistance for sustainability, growth, and scalability. The initiative highlights finalist businesses and their needs, aiming to attract more customers to the region's commercial corridors. Operated by TechTown Detroit and the Gilbert Family Foundation, it also receives assistance from Black Leaders Detroit and QT Business Solutions.



ABOUT THE PARTNERS

TechTown Detroit: TechTown -- Wayne State's entrepreneurship hub -- has been at the forefront of empowering entrepreneurs and creating sustainable economic impact in Detroit and beyond. A state-designated SmartZone and Small Business Support Hub, TechTown fuels equitable economic development by supporting businesses across industries—from tech-based ideas to retail and restaurants.

TechTown offers robust programming, co-working and event space, and tailored resources for early-stage founders and scalable small businesses, while also serving as a convening location. Over the past two decades, it has supported more than 7,000 businesses that have raised over \$420 million in capital and created more than 2,300 jobs. Serving Detroit, Hamtramck, Highland Park, and Greater Wayne County, TechTown is a cornerstone of Wayne State's commitment to innovation, entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic opportunity.

Gilbert Family Foundation: Gilbert Family Foundation is a private nonprofit foundation founded by Jennifer and Dan Gilbert to accelerate a cure for neurofibromatosis type 1 (NF1) and build economic opportunity and equity in the city of Detroit. The Gilbert Family Foundation supports groundbreaking, cutting-edge research in hopes of eradicating NF1, a genetic disorder that causes tumors to grow on nerves anywhere in the body. Additionally, the Foundation supports the economic stability and mobility of residents in Detroit by investing in wealth-building opportunities and breaking down systemic barriers.

Black Leaders Detroit: Established in 2019, Black Leaders Detroit's mission is to provide financial support for diverse social and community impact projects originated and led by Detroiters of African descent.

QT Business Solutions: QT Business Solutions is a technical assistance and business consulting company specializing in business plan writing, grant proposal writing and capital raising. Their mission is to serve the public by assisting small business owners and non-profit organizations with learning how to build a profitable business and helping them obtain the maximum amount of capital, sponsorships or grant funding available to them.

DETROIT ELEVATE VISION AND OBJECTIVE

Detroit Elevate recognizes, celebrates, and supports businesses that've launched and maintained operations in Detroit, Hamtramck, and Highland Park. Starting a business is hard, and to keep it open for more than three years is a testament to the strength and perseverance of our community's small business owners.

Detroit Elevate provides pathways to capital and technical assistance for existing businesses, supporting their future operations, improvements, and expansion efforts. It also looks to drive new customers to these businesses so that scalability is sustainable.

Detroit Elevate is not just another granting program-- it opens doors to long-term capital such as lines of credit and loans. It provides the coaching, technical assistance, and visibility businesses need to propel them to the next level.

FOUR GRANTING LEVELS:

\$50,000

First Place

\$30,000

Second Place

\$20,000

Third Place

Collaborator's Choice Award: **\$10,000**

All finalist will join a three-week business growth cohort and receive a technical assistance package from QT Business Solutions that includes a marketing audit, capital readiness assessment, business plan updates, and operational plans.

WHAT IS A SECOND-STAGE BUSINESS?

A second-stage small business is typically defined as a company that has moved beyond the startup phase and is now focused on growth, stability, and scalability. These businesses usually share a few common traits:

Established operations: They've proven their business model, have a steady customer base, and consistent revenue.

Key Employees: They have a core group of employees on payroll that support and maintain operations

Growth-oriented: They're looking to expand markets, increase efficiency, enhance customer experience, or invest in new products/services.

Needs: Unlike startups, their main challenges aren't just survival or proof of concept. Instead, they need support with scaling systems, hiring and retaining talent, accessing growth capital, expanding customer base, and developing management capacity.

A second-stage business isn't a brand-new startup, but it's also not a large corporation yet—it's a growth-stage company that has moved past proving viability and is preparing for larger-scale impact for itself and in the community it serves.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Businesses is a Sole Proprietorships, General Partnerships, Corporations (Inc., Corp.), Limited Liability Companies (LLC)*, or Limited Liability Partnerships (LP, LLP).
- The Business is established in the city of Detroit, Hamtramck, or Highland Park.
- The Business has been in operation for a minimum of three years
- The business sells products or services through a brick-and-mortar, e-commerce, or at pop-ups.
- Majority owners must be legal residents of the United States who are 18 years of age or older.
- Businesses must be in good standing with the IRS.

The following are NOT eligible to apply:

- Franchises are not eligible to apply.
- Not-for-profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

This application lets you share your business story, goals, and growth potential, helping us understand your current situation, plans, challenges, and how we can best support your success.

The application is **ONLY** available online at detroitelevate.org.

If you need help completing an application, you can call **(844) 317-2253** or email detroitelevate@techtowndetroit.org.

Detroit Elevate will also host an Info Session on **Tuesday, September 16 from 12-1PM** to help answer questions about the application.

BUILDING A STRONG APPLICATION

When writing your application, view it as a chance to showcase your business's unique story and vision. Explain how your goals align with the program and why this is the right time for growth.

Demonstrate traction using evidence like customer growth, revenue trends, or partnerships to illustrate momentum. Highlight the broader impact of your success, such as job creation or community strengthening.

Finally, ensure your application is clear and professional. Error-free responses will make a strong impression and help reviewers focus on your vision and commitment to growth. Answer all questions and include any required information.

SELECTED FINALISTS

After the application period closes, we will select Finalists who must fully participate in a three-week training cohort and a business Showcase event. The cohort equips businesses with essential growth tools, while the showcase provides visibility for their products and services. Participation in both is mandatory for Finalists to maximize this opportunity.

Detroit Elevate is both a learning experience and a celebration—giving each finalist the tools, exposure, and connections to take their business to the next level.

Cohort: September 30, October 7 and October 14 The selected finalists will take part in a three-week training cohort designed to help them sharpen their strategies, strengthen their operations, and get ready for growth. In addition to the training, the finalists will receive a technical assistance package and loan-readiness assistance. Please note: Finalists may be asked to submit additional business documentation and financials.

The Showcase: October 29 at Eastern Market Shed 5

At the Showcase, finalists will display their businesses, offering the public a chance to explore local services and products firsthand. Attendees will be able to meet the business owners, experience their offerings, and vote for their favorite. Public voting begins at the showcase and extends through November 7th, empowering the community to directly support and promote these businesses.

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Get Ready to Scale Up and Grow!

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First Place

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Second Place

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Third Place

\$10,000

Collaborator's Choice Award

Info Session:
Tuesday, September 16, 12-1pm

DATES & DEADLINES

Applications Open	Wednesday, September 10, 2025
Applications Close	Sunday, September 21 at 11:59 P.M.
Finalist Cohort Begins	September 30
Business Showcase Event	October 29 at Eastern Market Shed 5
Public Voting Begins	October 29
Award Ceremony	November 14 at Elevate

For application assistance:

Call our application hotline at **(844) 317-2253** during business hours or email us at **detroitelevate@techtowndetroit.org**