



CITY OF CARSON

Legislation Text

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Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, July 19, 2022

Discussion

SUBJECT:

**CONSIDER SPONSORSHIP OF THE CARSON SMALL BUSINESS ACADEMY
OFFERED BY CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY DOMINGUEZ HILLS (CSUDH)
INNOVATION INCUBATOR FOR A FALL 2022 COHORT (CITY COUNCIL)**

I. SUMMARY

As part of its Town-Gown Collaboration efforts, the City of Carson and California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) are developing ways to increase collaboration to meet the needs of the Carson community, including the business community. The CSUDH Innovation Incubator, a small business incubator housed within the College of Extended and International Education (CEIE) at CSUDH, has proposed partnering with the City to develop and run a CSUDH Carson Small Business Growth Academy (CCSBGA) at the university in the Fall of 2022 for Carson businesses. The CCSBGA is consistent with the City's interest in assisting its small businesses, especially those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and fostering entrepreneurship in Carson.

The City has recently funded two small business programs, an ARPA-funded Small Business Grant Program, and a City-funded Façade Improvement Program, at \$1,000,000 each. These programs are about to be marketed, and an effort to professionally develop the management skills in Carson companies is consistent with those efforts.

The request from CSUDH is for the City to fund the 10-week CCSBGA program at a cost of \$9,995.00.

II. RECOMMENDATION

1. APPROVE sponsorship of the inaugural CSUDH Carson Small Business Growth Academy for Carson businesses to be held at the CSUDH Innovation Incubator in the Fall of 2022, at a sponsorship cost of \$9,995.00.

III. ALTERNATIVES

TAKE another action the City Council deems appropriate.

IV. BACKGROUND

In April 2020, the City Council authorized a Small Business Lending Program to assist Carson businesses during the worst of the early COVID lockdowns when many businesses were unable to operate because of State or County stay-at-home orders. While COVID-19 remains fundamentally a health crisis that the State and County's public health and healthcare infrastructure is engaged in combatting, the economic crisis due to business closures and stay-at-home orders followed closely behind during that early period.

The City led the efforts to support the local economy by establishing the Loan Program with an initial \$500,000 allocation from the General Fund and followed it with a CDBG-funded Grant Program. Access to resources was distributed as equitably as possible. On June 8, 2022 the City Council voted to provide loan forgiveness to all the loan recipients from 2020 and 2021 because of the lingering economic impacts of COVID on the small business community.

These efforts were consistent with the City's overall priority of helping small businesses. In an effort to institutionalize these programs, the City requested its Development Strategic Plan Consultant to inventory and evaluate existing small business and entrepreneurial development programs available in Carson (including City programs and resources available through other organizations) to incorporate into the overall plan. This assessment will help the City develop a comprehensive approach to providing small business assistance and entrepreneurial development support, with the City serving in a "clearinghouse" capacity. Among other things, the plan will include strategies that incorporate the following:

- (a) Access to capital (loans and grants)
- (b) Technical assistance
- (c) Small Business Development Center (SBDC) resources
- (d) CSUDH Small Business Incubator
- (e) South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB)
- (f) Façade improvement programs
- (g) Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

This program is consistent with the City's stated priorities: accessing the resources of the Innovation Incubator at CSUDH for Carson businesses was identified as one of the City's priorities. The Incubator has tailored a program for Carson businesses emerging from the pandemic and proposes its inaugural class to be in the Fall of 2022. It would be a cohort of up to 30 participants and taught at the CSUDH Incubator facilities on campus.

This list includes additional priorities as well: (a) access to capital (loans and grants), such

as the City's COVID-related loan program during the height of the lockdowns and, (b) technical assistance to businesses seeking SBA Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) or Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL). The City of Carson has now allocated \$1,000,000 in Federal ARPA moneys to fund a Small Business COVID-19 Grant Program and priority (f), a City-funded Façade Improvement Program, also at \$1,000,000. Both will be administered by the City.

This first cohort of the Carson Small Business Growth Academy is intended for Carson small business owners or senior management in companies with up to 100 employees and/or revenue up to \$20 million. This is a broader definition of small businesses than what the City used in its loan programs, but because this is a classroom environment "mom and pop" firms especially benefit from being in a cohort with executives from businesses of all sizes and types.

The recommended start date would be Fall 2022 - Friday, September 9, 2022 or September 16, 2022 and would be structured as nine weekly 2-hour workshops with "homework" and/or "group work" outside of the learning environment and a culminating showcase on Week 10.

The theme of the course would be "Grow from Where You Are." The curriculum would feature the lead instructor for the duration of the Academy, with featured weekly guest speakers and/or content experts. The Curriculum Topics include:

1. Planning Growth - Growth oriented leadership planning
2. Market Growth Strategies - Pathways to new and expanded revenue streams
3. Building Technical Growth - CRMs, accounting software, & other technical infrastructure
4. Sales and Marketing Strategies for Growth - Upgrading digital and physical presence
5. Customer Service/Customer Relations - Growth through service and customer experience
6. Business Financing - Internal and external sources of financial capital
7. Human Resources/Legal/Regulations/Permitting - Getting it right the first time
8. Branding/Advertising 2.0 - Conveying your customer promise
9. Leadership - Ongoing growth leadership techniques for your business
10. Showcase of Participants' Businesses - With invited Guests/City Officials

Participants would be eligible for two (2) Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for those who request it and complete the program. Registration for the program would be performed by the College of Extended and International Education (CEIE) at CSUDH.

The cost of the Academy would be \$9,995.00 for up to 30 Participants (facilitator/guest speaker costs, materials, parking, breakfast). CSUDH provides use of their facilities as an in-kind donation. The Incubator has requested the funding for this cohort from the City of Carson.

This is a pilot. CSUDH and the Innovation Incubator hope to offer continued growth academies; based upon the results and learnings of this inaugural pilot program, CSUDH hopes to be able to scale the program to both larger cohorts offered 2-4 times a year, potentially with specialization by industries, and other specialty cohorts including brick-and-mortar vs. online, etc. They would seek other funding sources for these programs.

V. FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of the Academy would be \$9995.00, from City funds as part of a sponsorship. Funds are available in the Community Development Department account number 101-70-780-290-6004 (Community Development/Planning Professional Services).

VI. EXHIBITS

1. Proposal from Innovation Incubator for Carson Small Business Growth Academy (pg. 5)

Prepared by: John S. Raymond, Assistant City Manager-Economic Development