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## **New Economy Initiative Announces \$19.5M Fund to Strengthen Inclusive Small Business Support Network**

- **Builds on catalytic philanthropic investment in NEI, new funding will further strengthen existing business support network and to provide more resources for underserved small businesses in Detroit and Wayne County**
- **New office at Invest Detroit will focus on network coordination to ensure comprehensive and timely support tools**

**DETROIT** – The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan announced a new \$19.5M fund that will strengthen an inclusive small business support network of nonprofit business support organizations (BSOs) in Detroit, Hamtramck, Highland Park and other Wayne County communities. This network provides small businesses with inclusive access to capital, practical assistance, information, and trusted connections to business resources. The new fund builds on the New Economy Initiative’s (NEI) focus on existing and new small businesses under 50 employees that are navigating the challenges of COVID’s impact and looking ahead for growth opportunities.

“In Detroit and neighboring Wayne County communities, thousands of small businesses are underserved because of race, national origin, and gender, in addition to the historical underinvestment in these areas,” said Pamela Lewis, executive director, NEI. “NEI’s investment in an inclusive small business support network will do more for these small businesses that are serving all residents and community members through employment, services, and community wealth building.”

Contributors to the fund include the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Ford Foundation, Hudson-Webber Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, William Davidson Foundation, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

“It was groundbreaking to receive six months of loan forgiveness and three months of rent assistance from ProsperUs [a BSO] during this pandemic,” said Danielle North, owner of Kidz Kingdom. “Despite the challenges of COVID-19, as a small business owner, I’ve been tremendously blessed by the support of the philanthropic community. Without the loan forgiveness and rent assistance, we would not have made it.”



To further support this critical network, NEI also announced a partnership with Invest Detroit which has established a new Network Director office that will lead and manage the stewardship and coordination role of the BSO network. In this role, the Network Director will serve as a convener, identify needs or support gaps missing from the existing set of programs, mobilize the network for quick execution, and engage with business owners to ensure the network of support is known and relevant to their needs. NEI will continue as the grantmaker and will leverage its work to expand its role to advocate for policy that supports underserved small businesses. Working together, the Network Director and NEI leadership will ensure the BSOs and the small businesses they serve are equipped to meet their needs.

“Even before the economic crisis caused by COVID, many local organizations were beginning to work together to better support our small businesses,” said Dave Blaszkiwicz, CEO of Invest Detroit. “As this work continues, along with more urgent and timely efforts like Detroit Means Business, now is the time to strengthen our coordination efforts to not only survive the current climate but to provide long-term growth support for our community’s small businesses and economy.”

“NEI has established itself as a national leader in support of entrepreneurs and small businesses,” says Mariam Noland, president of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. “This is the right time to partner with an expert organization like Invest Detroit and to allow NEI to focus on advocating for small businesses in Detroit, throughout Michigan and across the country.”

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### **About the New Economy Initiative**

The New Economy Initiative is a philanthropic collaboration and special project of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan that is working to build a regional network of support for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Its mission is to grow an inclusive culture of entrepreneurship in southeast Michigan that benefits all residents and strengthens the regional economy. Learn more at <https://neweconomyinitiative.org/>.

### **About the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan**

The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan is a full-service philanthropic organization leading the way to positive change in our region. As a permanent community endowment built by gifts from thousands of individuals and organizations, the Foundation supports a wide variety of activities benefiting education, arts and culture, health, human services, community development, and civic affairs. Since its inception, the Foundation has distributed more than \$1.2 billion through more than 80,000 grants to nonprofit organizations throughout Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Monroe,



Washtenaw, St. Clair, and Livingston counties. For more information, visit [www.cfsem.org](http://www.cfsem.org).

**About Invest Detroit**

Invest Detroit is a nonprofit lender, investor, and partner that supports business and real estate projects that will ignite economic growth in Detroit and the region. Their goal is to increase density and job opportunities in a way that is strategic and inclusive. Learn more at [www.InvestDetroit.com](http://www.InvestDetroit.com).