

# IMPACT REPORT

January 2017 – June 2024



COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE OF  
PHILADELPHIA

Power Up Your Business

## Community Business Innovation and Acceleration

Fueling Growth at the Intersection of  
Anchor Institutions and  
Small Businesses









## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Dear Leaders, Partners and Entrepreneurs,

**I am continually inspired** by the ingenuity, resilience and ambition of Philadelphia's established for-profit business community. In 2024, Power Up Your Business witnessed how rigorous training, expert-led coaching and values-aligned peer learning transformed entrepreneurial vision into thriving enterprise. Across our programs, entrepreneurs grew operations, launched new ventures, created jobs and responded to emerging opportunities shaping our local economy.

Through our Business Innovation and Acceleration program, we fuel growth at the intersection of anchor institutions and small businesses, creating a dynamic ecosystem where local entrepreneurs and major institutions collaborate to drive lasting economic vitality. From neighborhood bakeries to tech startups, participants across multiple industries scaled ventures that generated wealth, supported workforce efforts and strengthened Philadelphia's economy, proving that inclusive growth is not aspirational, it is happening across our communities.

To our entrepreneurs: Your ambition drives our mission. Your courage to take risks, persistence through uncertainty, and commitment to building businesses that sustain families and neighborhoods inspire everything we do. Whether expanding into new markets, strengthening operations or reimagining what is possible, Power Up walks alongside you, providing practical tools, trusted networks, access to capital, and top tier business coaches to help your ideas grow, scale, and endure.

This impact would not be possible without the extraordinary commitment of our faculty, coaches, community partners and the College's administration, whose leadership and expertise ensure our entrepreneurs receive rigorous, practical instruction. Our alumni continue to serve as mentors, collaborators, employers and ambassadors, reinforcing a cycle of shared learning and opportunity that makes the program sustainable.

Looking ahead, we will continue to deepen collaborations with city government, chambers of commerce, nonprofits, business districts and regional thought leaders while expanding industry-focused programming; enhancing our digital platform; and delivering even more high impact training, coaching and peer learning. We are grateful to our funders, College leadership, faculty, coaches, partners, and alumni, whose support enables entrepreneurs to grow businesses, create jobs, and strengthen Philadelphia's economy. We call on current and future entrepreneurs to act boldly, scale their ventures, and power up their businesses.

With gratitude and excitement for the year ahead,



Tiffany Spraggins-Payne  
Director, Power Up Your Business  
Community College of Philadelphia

# PHILADELPHIA SMALL BUSINESS IN 2024:

## Resilient Roots, Growing Opportunities



Philadelphia's small business sector continued to thrive, drawing strength from established neighborhood enterprises, community-driven networks and targeted expert coaching, rather than relying solely on new investments. Even as macroeconomic pressures persisted, entrepreneurs proved resilient, adaptive and deeply rooted in local markets. Philadelphia's long-standing business corridors remain the ecosystem's backbone. Citywide collaborations sustained by organizations like the **Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC)** underscore the power of relational support. PACDC reports<sup>1</sup> that returning in-person peer learning sessions "provided opportunities for collaboration, connection, and growth" and included "training, coaching and peer learning" that fortified corridor-level leadership.

Expert guidance from industry practitioners continues to translate into tangible outcomes. Meanwhile, coordinated procurement efforts through initiatives like the **Economy League's PAGE**<sup>2</sup> program demonstrate the value of strategic networks, unlocking \$38.6 million in contract revenue for more than 95 local, diversely owned firms.

Broader economic signals remain favorable. The Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>3</sup> shows Philadelphia's labor market is not only stable, it's strengthening. In the year ending mid-2024, the region added 66,200 jobs, reflecting a 2.2 percent employment growth rate, surpassing the national average. These gains, spanning health care, education, logistics, and manufacturing, provide a rising tide that benefits neighborhood businesses large and small.

Still, financial pressure persists. The Philadelphia Fed's Small Business Credit Survey<sup>4</sup> found that 57 percent of small businesses rated their financial condition as "fair or poor" in 2023. Continuing peer networks and expert coaching remain essential to unlock long-term stability and local economic equity.

Philadelphia's 2024 small business success story stems from enduring institutions that innovate, peer communities that support and a labor market whose vitality creates space for local businesses to grow. By blending neighborhood trust, practical mentorship, and expanding economic opportunity, the city's entrepreneurial ecosystem remains dynamic, inclusive, and resilient.

### Appendix: Source References

1. **Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC)**  
FY 2024 Annual Report. PACDC states it "deepened its commitment to building stronger communities through comprehensive training, peer learning and strategic capacity building initiatives" and that its programs "bring together community development professionals, small business owners, and neighborhood leaders to share knowledge, build skills and forge lasting connections." [pacdc.org](https://pacdc.org)

2. **Economy League of Greater Philadelphia – PAGE Initiative**  
PAGE reports: "In 2023, PAGE supported 95+ businesses through our programming and helped to unlock over \$38.6 MM in contract revenue for local, minority-owned firms."

3. **Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)**  
Regional Labor Market Data: BLS indicates that in the year ending mid-2024, Philadelphia added 66,200 jobs, reflecting a 2.2 percent employment growth rate, surpassing the national average.

4. **Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia – Small Business Credit Survey (2024)**  
The survey reports that "57 percent of small businesses in the Philadelphia metro said financial conditions were poor or fair in 2023."

## BUSINESS OWNER AND COMMUNITY LEADER SPOTLIGHT

# SMOKIN' SONE'S FRESH GRILL

**Sonya R. Combs,  
Founder and CEO**

*Southwest Philadelphia*



## FROM GRILL TO GREATNESS: HOW CHEF SONYA R. COMBS BUILT ONE OF PHILADELPHIA'S MOST TALKED ABOUT CULINARY BRANDS

**Sonya R. Combs** leads one of Philadelphia's most distinctive culinary brands. She is the head of a proudly minority, woman-owned catering and private chef company serving the tri-state area. Since 2012, her team has elevated events with signature upscale comfort and international fresh grill cuisine, crafted from peak freshness, locally sourced ingredients and delivered with a truly personalized touch.

Her business reached a new level after graduating from the Peer-based Learning Experience. "Growing alongside small business owners from diverse industries was invaluable," Combs recalls. "As peers shared creative solutions from their own industries, it encouraged me to borrow ideas and brilliance." Surrounded by innovators, she gained reassurance from people who truly understood the ups and downs, and the accountability to keep pushing forward.

With expert business coaching provided through the Peer-based Learning Experience, Combs says, "That clarity enabled me to fine tune processes, discover overlooked opportunities, and create a tactical improvement plan that combined SMART goals, process refinements, and targeted growth strategies." This plan became the blueprint for accelerated success, driving a significant boost in revenue, sparking new partnerships, and leading to the expansion into a commercial restaurant and event venue in Philadelphia.

"Trust the process. What you put into the program is what you get out of it," she says. Her journey proves that vision, strategy and community create unstoppable momentum.

[www.smokinsone.com](http://www.smokinsone.com)



## Power Up Your Business Program

Since launching in January 2017, Power Up Your Business has delivered:

- **24 Peer-based Learning Experience cohorts** (21 in English, 3 in Spanish)
- **288+ workshops** across the city
- **Support for hundreds of businesses** through training, business coaching and connections to strategic resources

The program continues to grow and evolve, helping business owners strengthen operations, expand their reach, and create long-term impact in their communities.



## Peer-based Learning Experience

Our signature 12-week, 36-hour cohort program provides small business owners with intensive training, one-on-one coaching and post-program support for up to a year. Offered three times annually, the program rotates among our Regional Centers, Main Campus, and community partner satellite locations, with hybrid and virtual options available.

By targeting businesses along commercial corridors in West, North, Northeast, South Philadelphia, Center City, and beyond, we ensure that business owners receive the tools and strategies they need to thrive in their local markets.

Aligned with our unwavering commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, we've launched the Power Up Global Series, expanding the scope of our entrepreneurship programming. By translating our training curriculum into multiple languages, we're fostering diversity and engagement. Already, our collaborations with partners like **FINANTA/Community First Fund** (GS1) and **Impact Services** (GS2) have facilitated three all-Spanish Peer-based cohorts. Plans are also underway to run Mandarin and Korean cohorts within these unique business communities.

Every cohort is supported by six part-time instructors, a dedicated financial coach, and up to 10 general business coaches, creating a collaborative, high-touch learning environment. Key program components include:

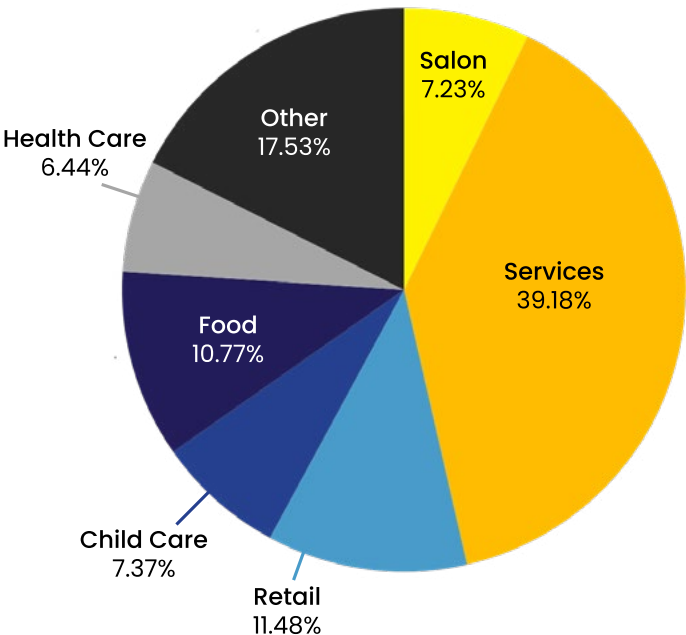
- Tactical improvement plans focused on business growth priorities
- Custom one-on-one coaching to co-develop SMART goals
- Strategic networking and capacity building through peer learning and ecosystem connections
- A final pitch presentation demonstrating growth and strategies gained through the program

These success stories underscore the transformative impact of the program, where entrepreneurs move from planning to execution, driving real-world business growth and strengthening the fabric of Philadelphia's economy.

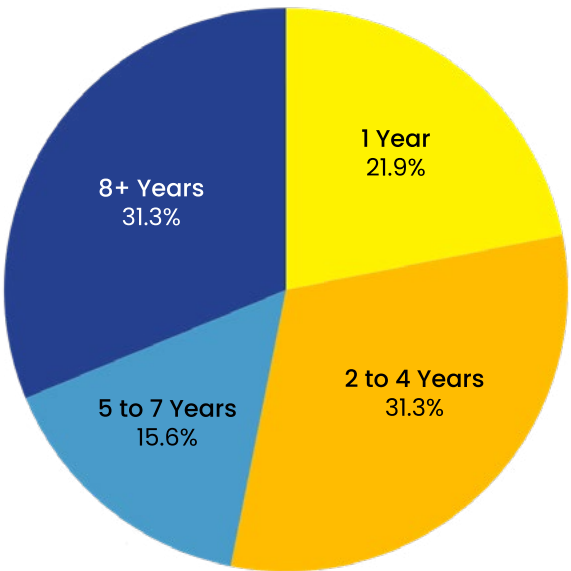
# PEER-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCE

## Business Profile

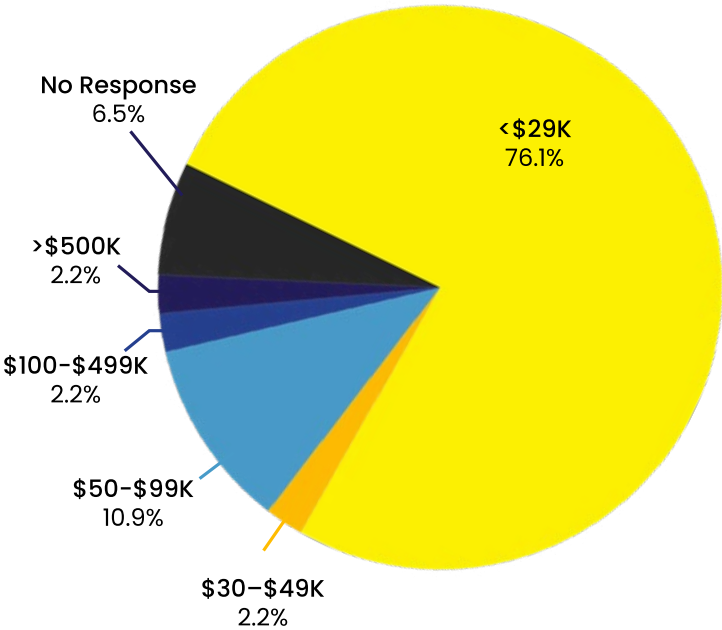
**TYPES OF  
BUSINESSES**



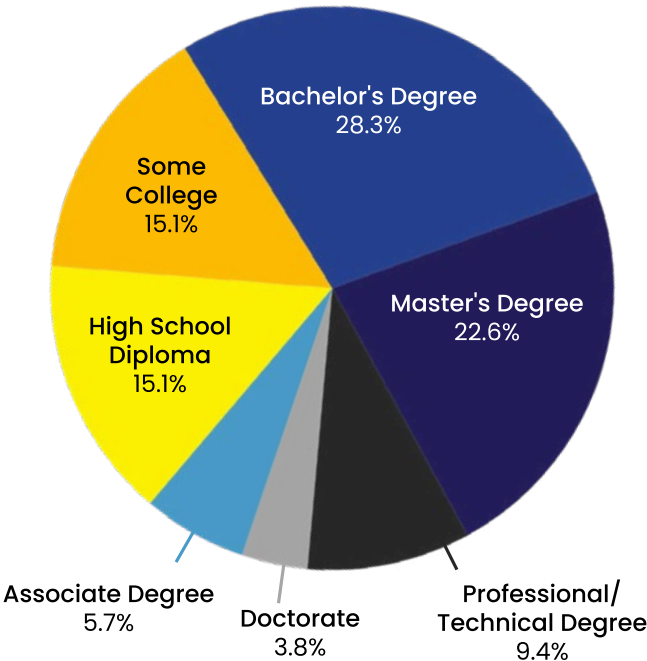
**YEARS IN  
BUSINESSES**



**YEARLY SALES**



**PARTICIPANTS'  
EDUCATIONAL STATUS**



\*2017 – 2024



**A TESTAMENT TO THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF  
THE PEER-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCE**



**463**

Total  
Businesses



**495**

Total  
Participants



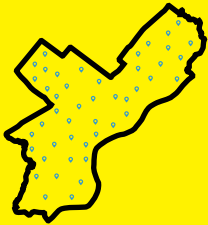
**729**

Full-time  
Employees



**620**

Part-time  
Employees



**46**

ZIP Codes  
Represented



**10**

City Council  
Districts Represented



**92%**

Minority-owned  
Businesses



**76%**

Women-owned  
Businesses



**767**

Temporary  
Workers  
(1099s)



**39.1%**

Home-based  
Businesses



**30.4%**

Lease Space



**21.7%**

Own Space



# Community Small Business Development Workshops and Partnerships

Since September 2017, Power Up Your Business has hosted **242 workshops**, engaging more than **5,400 participants** across Philadelphia.

Delivered in partnership with community organizations and business associations, these workshops are designed to meet neighborhood needs and strengthen both small businesses and the commercial corridors they anchor.

Using a hub-and-spoke model, we bring high-impact, practical sessions directly into libraries, community centers, business corridors and even inside local businesses. Each workshop is shaped by targeted needs assessments and focuses on the most pressing challenges facing Philadelphia entrepreneurs, including digital marketing, e-commerce tools, access to capital, financial management, and understanding Philadelphia business taxes.

Led by experienced instructors with real-world expertise, our workshops provide actionable strategies that business owners can apply immediately, helping them adapt, grow and thrive.

## Quarterly In-person Workshops

In collaboration with the **East Falls Community Development Corporation**, Power Up hosts quarterly in-person workshops inside neighborhood businesses, bringing resources directly into the commercial corridors where they are needed most. Over the past two years, this partnership was forged through the leadership of Tiffany Spraggins-Payne, Power Up director; Christopher Hess, Power Up outreach coordinator; and Michelle Feldman, executive director of the East Falls Community Development Corporation.

Power Up’s outreach efforts include the co-creation of workshop topics based on direct feedback captured from program participants to ensure continuity of knowledge, alignment with subject matter expertise and consideration of varied learning preferences. These sessions are designed to be practical, relevant and responsive to the real-time needs of local entrepreneurs.

Recent workshops have focused on:

- Marketing, including branding, social media and customer engagement strategies
- Finance, including bookkeeping, financial planning and managerial accounting for small businesses
- Philadelphia business taxes, with a focus on demystifying local tax requirements and compliance strategies

In-person workshops are held at small business locations, particularly those owned by graduates of the Peer-based Learning Experience.

Recent host sites include:

- **Thunder Mug Café**
- **Vault + Vine**

These gatherings are intentionally local, practical, and community-centered, transforming coffee shops, storefronts, and neighborhood meeting spaces into hubs of learning, collaboration, and connection.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS IMPACT DATA	
IN PERSON	ONLINE
95 Total Number of Workshops	87 Total Number of Workshops
2,496 Total Number of Participants	2,436 Total Number of Participants

*\*September 2017 - June 2024*

## SUCCESS STORY: THUNDER MUG CAFÉ

Residents who took the Tacony CDC Resident Survey listed a sit-down coffee shop as the number one business they desired. Power Up's leadership played a pivotal role in connecting Lizette Apy, owner of **Thunder Mug Café**, with the **Tacony CDC**. As a proud graduate of Power Up's Cohort 19 Peer-based Learning Experience and an actively engaged small business owner in the East Falls community, Lizette brought both vision and dedication to the process.

Over the course of two years, Power Up supported Lizette and the Tacony CDC in exploring space options and navigating small business development resources, ultimately paving the way for the opening of a vibrant new café and market in Tacony. Supported through a blended capital investment, Thunder Mug Café's second location opened in 2025.

This expansion not only fulfills a long-expressed resident demand but also stands as a model for how corridor-based business development can spark new investment, energy and opportunity across Philadelphia's neighborhoods.

Lizette's journey exemplifies the transformative impact of Power Up alumni. Her growth underscores the program's mission of equipping small business owners with the knowledge, tools and networks to scale their businesses while strengthening the fabric of their communities.



## Partnerships that Multiply Impact

Collaboration remains at the heart of Power Up. In 2024, our network of partners included:

- **East Falls Community Development Corporation**, co-host of quarterly corridor based workshops
- **LA21 Community Development Corporation**, co-creator of specialized technical assistance for Peer-based Learning graduates
- **SCORE Philadelphia Chapter, African American Chamber of Commerce, Asian American Chamber of Commerce, Tacony Community Development Corporation**, and the **Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce**, expanding reach and mentorship opportunities
- **Philadelphia Commerce Department's Office of Business Services**, providing citywide support for entrepreneurs
- **City of Philadelphia's Mayor's Business Action Team (MBAT)**, a strategic partner and co-collaborator on workshops, assisting small businesses with obtaining their Commercial Activities License (CAL) and accessing additional city resources
- **The Business Center**, a strategic partner on an annual Industry Best Practices Strategic Networking Series
- **Mt. Airy Community Development Corporation**, a collaborative partner on the Philly iHub initiative

## Our Impact

By embedding workshops directly into communities and tailoring content to real needs, Power Up strengthens Philadelphia's small business fabric, one corridor, one entrepreneur and one success story at a time.



# REALLY REEL GINGER

## Iliyaas and Hadia Muhammad, Co-founders and Partners

*West Philadelphia*



### FROM KIOSK TO MARKET MAINSTAY: HOW ILIYAAS AND HADIA MUHAMMAD SPICED UP PHILLY WITH REALLY REEL GINGER

**Iliyaas Muhammad**, alongside his wife and business partner, **Hadia Muhammad**, have built one of Philadelphia's most distinctive wellness brands from the ground up. Together, they have transformed their passion for the powerful benefits of ginger into a thriving enterprise at the historic Reading Terminal Market. Their diverse product line includes ginger-based beverages, dry goods, skincare, and haircare, serving customers seeking natural wellness and self-care solutions.

Graduates of the Peer-based Learning Experience, the Muhammads credit the program with giving them the insights and tools that reshaped their business strategy and fueled sustained growth. "Engaging with entrepreneurs from diverse industries encouraged creative problem-solving, adaptability and a broader understanding of customer needs," Iliyaas says.

They shared, "With expert business coaching provided through the Peer-based Learning Experience, we were able to refine our processes, safeguard against inefficiencies and pinpoint the most valuable strategies for achieving our goals."

The results speak for themselves: Annual sales have risen by 18 percent each year, operations have expanded from a 10-foot kiosk to a 200-square-foot permanent store, and the brand now reaches millions of visitors annually. "We are now applying lessons learned from the program to enhance our offerings and ensure we fulfill our mission of promoting healthier lifestyles for a wide demographic."

[www.reallyreelginger.com](http://www.reallyreelginger.com)

## INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES

Industry Best Practices programs offer focused training for business owners in areas such as:

- Retail
- Restaurants
- E-commerce
- Micro-manufacturing
- Legal essentials for small businesses
- Digital marketing strategies

These eight-week training experiences dive deep into sector-specific challenges and opportunities while integrating the peer-based learning approach that fosters collaboration, problem-solving, and innovation.

This initiative has become a powerful tool for business owners to sharpen operations, build resilience and take advantage of growth opportunities in their industries.

## Collaboration at the Crossroads of Education, Medicine and Entrepreneurship

In Philadelphia, where the synergy between “eds and meds” drives both economic growth and community vitality, strategic partnerships between anchor institutions and small businesses are proving transformative.



## INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES 2020–2024



### RETAIL BOOT CAMP

8 Total Cohorts  
32 Total Businesses  
32 Total Participants



### MANUFACTURING BEST PRACTICES

2 Total Cohorts  
33 Total Businesses  
33 Total Participants



### E-COMMERCE BEST PRACTICES

4 Total Cohorts  
70 Total Businesses  
70 Total Participants



### CHILD CARE BEST PRACTICES

2 Total Cohorts  
34 Total Businesses  
42 Total Participants





## MEETING THE CRITERIA: The Wholesaler's Path to Market

Through a collaborative initiative with **Ajeenah S. Amir**, director of Civic Engagement & Community Partnerships at Penn Medicine, and **Tiffany Spraggins-Payne**, director of Power Up Your Business, the program facilitated a unique opportunity for local entrepreneurs. Representatives from the University of Pennsylvania Health System (HUP) sought to expand **Hydra Health's** product offerings while strengthening connections to Philadelphia's small business ecosystem.

To qualify, alumni had to demonstrate readiness across a rigorous set of criteria that mirrors the standards of national retail buyers, including:

- Conducting deep product and market research to ensure retail fit and consumer demand
- Meeting strict product quality and compliance standards, including labeling, safety, and durability requirements
- Delivering standout branding and packaging suitable for a hospital retail environment
- Establishing a sustainable pricing strategy, balancing wholesale profitability with retailer margins
- Building robust systems for order processing, inventory management and fulfillment
- Creating professional catalogs, pitch materials and sales sheets
- Demonstrating strong relationship-building and outreach capacity with institutional buyers

This process was more than paperwork. It served as a real-world readiness test, ensuring participating alumni could thrive in a hospital retail shop with high traffic and a diverse consumer base of patients, employees, and visitors.

## THE SELECTED ALUMNI: From Classroom to Corridor to Pavilion

From an initial pool of eight Power Up alumni reviewed for this opportunity, two businesses emerged ready to meet the moment:

- **Bessie Lee-Cappell**, founder of *Baby Bottle Brush Bib Co.*, whose line of parenting essentials, including the Easy Scrub, Elephant Pacifiers, and Pacifier Teether Clip brings innovation, convenience, and safety to caregivers navigating life's busiest days.
- **Iliyaas and Hadia Muhammad**, co-founders of *ReallyReel Ginger*, whose all-natural ginger-based grab-and-go beverages and snackable ginger crumble deliver wellness and flavor, aligning perfectly with Hydra Health's focus on everyday essentials for health-minded consumers.

Both businesses embody the mission of Power Up: equipping entrepreneurs with the skills, strategy and support to compete in larger markets while staying rooted in their communities.

## A Model for the Future

What began as a single opportunity has already sparked ongoing conversations. The collaboration's success has led to further discussions about expanding the pipeline of Power Up alumni into Hydra Health retail shops, offering a steady rotation of Philadelphia-made products to hospital visitors and staff.

This is more than retail. It is a model of how anchor institutions can leverage purchasing power and visibility to strengthen the city's small business ecosystem. By opening their doors to entrepreneurs who once sat in a Power Up classroom, institutions like Penn are demonstrating that collaboration at the intersection of education, medicine and entrepreneurship can reshape not just local corridors, but the entire Philadelphia economy.

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# ELITE ID FITNESS

## Joshua Oredipe, Founder and CEO

*Port Richmond*



### FROM REPS TO REVENUE: HOW JOSHUA OREDIPE IS REDEFINING FITNESS IN PHILADELPHIA

In Philadelphia's Port Richmond neighborhood, Elite ID Fitness is raising the bar for what a wellness experience can be. Founded by **Joshua Oredipe**, the private studio specializes in strength training, nutrition coaching and lifestyle accountability, delivering results for working professionals tired of cookie-cutter gyms. With personal training, small group classes, and open gym sessions, Elite ID Fitness offers a clean and focused environment designed for lasting transformation.

Oredipe's turning point came as a graduate of the Peer-based Learning Experience. With expert business coaching provided through the program, he developed a tactical improvement plan that became his blueprint for growth. "The most valuable part was building a sense of community through shared experiences and realizing how objective I could be with others' businesses but not my own," he says. "The program helped me rationalize where my business stood and guided me in creating a clear, actionable plan to reach my goals."

The results speak for themselves. Revenue is up, client retention has climbed thanks to streamlined systems, and marketing now blends online presence with targeted in-person engagement. For Oredipe, the mission is clear: create a sustainable business that delivers stability for himself, his clients and the community he serves, one rep at a time.

[www.eliteidfitness.com](http://www.eliteidfitness.com)



## STORE OWNER SERIES WORKSHOPS

Since its launch, the Store Owner Series has hosted 71 free workshops at the College's Main Campus, Regional Centers, libraries, small business facilities and online. These sessions provide entrepreneurs with practical tools to strengthen their foundations, grow their businesses and connect with resources across Philadelphia. Many participants have gone on to join the Peer-based Learning Experience, while others return for multiple workshops, reflecting their commitment to building skills and scaling their businesses.

### TOPICS FROM 2019–2024 INCLUDE:

- *Social Media Strategy*
- *Understanding Philadelphia City Business Taxes*
- *Financial Management and Managerial Accounting for Small Business*
- *From Ideas to Impact: Using AI for Research and Content Creation*
- *Unlock the Power of AI: Supercharge Your Small Business with Generative AI*
- *Business Model and Value Proposition*
- *Strategies for Protecting Your Business Secrets*
- *Manufacturing Procedures for Small Business*
- *Digital Merchandising*
- *Operating Agreements and Contracts*
- *Business Compliance Issues for Small Businesses*
- *Search Engine Optimization Basics for Your Small Business*
- *Know Your Financial Numbers*

Workshops are developed in collaboration with more than 60 community organizations and business associations citywide. New sessions are introduced regularly to keep content timely, relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of Philadelphia's small business community.

## STORE OWNER SERIES IMPACT DATA\*



767

Total Businesses  
Participated



2,118

Total Number of  
Workshop Attendees



71

Total Number  
of Workshops



42

ZIP Codes  
Represented



10

City Council  
Districts Represented

\*September 2017 – June 2024



## COMMUNITY STARTUP ACCELERATOR

The Community Startup Accelerator was launched during the pandemic to support aspiring entrepreneurs and help new businesses take root in a challenging time. Over five cohorts, the program graduated **81 businesses**, many of which are now contributing to Philadelphia's economy and local corridors.

As Power Up Your Business has refocused on strengthening established for-profit enterprises, the baton has been passed to **LA21 CDC**. Today, LA21 CDC primarily serves this startup population by providing business education and technical assistance to help early-stage entrepreneurs build strong foundations.

Their efforts are designed to prepare fledgling businesses for the Power Up Peer-based Learning Experience, and referrals between our programs happen frequently.

This partnership ensures that entrepreneurs at every stage from startup to scale up have access to the right resources, training and networks they need to succeed.

## POWER UP YOUR BUSINESS AND THE 76ERS: Igniting Entrepreneurial Growth in Philadelphia – Inaugural Alumni Dinner and Pitch Competition

In 2024, the **Philadelphia 76ers** reached out to the Chief Engagement Office at Community College of Philadelphia, seeking meaningful ways to support locally-owned businesses. This conversation quickly evolved into a collaboration, leading the 76ers to invite **Tiffany Spraggins-Payne and her team, the leadership of Power Up Your Business**, to submit a proposal. The result: a \$25,000 grant to launch a transformative initiative, the **Peer-based Learning Experience Alumni Dinner and Pitch Competition**.

Set to debut in spring 2026, this series will showcase the accomplishments of Power Up alumni while creating new opportunities for continued investment in their entrepreneurial journeys. The initiative is designed to create a “closed-loop” support system, allowing alumni to secure reinvestment in the goals they developed during the program, from SMART objectives to tactical improvement plans and final graduation pitches.

### Empowerment Pitch Challenge: Key Features

This innovative series blends celebration, networking and strategic support for Philadelphia's small businesses:

- **Exclusive Networking Events:** Invitation-only dinners featuring keynote speakers from Philadelphia's business community, fostering mentorship, collaboration and enduring professional connections
- **Small Business Pitch Competition:** Alumni present their business strategies, community impact, and growth potential to a panel of industry experts and influential community leaders
- **Capacity-building Micro-grants:** Up to 10 micro-grants of \$2,500 each will be awarded based on pitch effectiveness and operational needs, enabling alumni to implement critical improvements, including technology upgrades and operational enhancements

### Impact and Vision

This series exemplifies the power of strategic partnerships between anchor institutions and the local small business ecosystem. By reinvesting in Power Up alumni, the program ensures support extends well beyond graduation, giving entrepreneurs the resources they need to scale, execute strategies and sustain growth.

The **Alumni Dinner and Pitch Competition** will also cultivate a vibrant community of practice, where alumni can network, share insights, and access funding opportunities that were previously out of reach. These reinvestments turn graduation plans into tangible outcomes, strengthening Philadelphia's economic resilience and fostering the city's entrepreneurial spirit.

# **ARTS & CLASS BEAUTY STUDIO**

**Candace Miller,  
Founder and CEO**

*Fishtown*



## **FROM FISHTOWN TO FAME: HOW CANDACE MILLER IS REDEFINING SELF-CARE IN PHILADELPHIA**

**Candace Miller**, founder of Arts & Class Beauty Studio in Fishtown, has created a destination where busy women can experience personalized facials, full body waxing and flawless makeup services. Specializing in solutions for adult acne, hyperpigmentation and skin texture, she blends clean, vegan skincare with a welcoming, judgment-free atmosphere, making self-care both results driven and relaxing.

Her business reached new heights through the Peer-based Learning Experience, where she discovered the power of community. "The most valuable part was the community aspect. Business can feel lonely, and knowing others were in the same place, learning the same lessons, was incredibly comforting. My approach has changed. I'm more open to asking questions, using my resources and leaning on my audience to understand what they want and don't want."

With expert coaching, Candace sharpened her strategy. "With guidance from my business coach, I developed my tactical improvement plan, refined my customer reach and increased my revenue," she says. "I'm not at my ultimate goal yet, but I'm on the way, and I believe it will only get better."

Proud and enthusiastic about the future, Candace aims to make Arts & Class Philadelphia's go to self-care destination. "Be ready to do real work and reflection. The more truthful you are, the better the program will help you."

[www.artsandclassbeauty.com](http://www.artsandclassbeauty.com)



## **FUELING AMBITION:** Power Up and SCORE's Winning Formula for Small Business Growth

Through a strategic, catalytic partnership, **Power Up Your Business** and the **SCORE Philadelphia Chapter** provide aspiring and existing entrepreneurs with mentorship, practical tools, and networks to grow and scale their businesses. Together, they help entrepreneurs gain critical knowledge, expand their "kitchen cabinet" of support, and develop business models designed for long-term success.



Christopher Hess, Power Up outreach coordinator, and the **SCORE Philadelphia Chapter** work closely to deliver in-person and virtual sessions through the **Store Owner and Industry Best Practices series**, while entrepreneurs operational for at least one year are guided into the **Power Up Peer-Based Learning Experience**, led by Loren Heywood, Power Up program manager. This coordinated approach ensures participants receive both the practical guidance and expert mentorship needed to thrive.

In 2024, **SCORE National celebrated its 60th Anniversary Pitch Competitions**, launched in Philadelphia at **Saint Joseph's University** and held across multiple states. These competitions celebrated innovation and entrepreneurship, helping small business owners improve presentation and selling skills with guidance from SCORE mentors and industry experts. Thanks to generous sponsors, top pitches received prize money: first and second place from **Global Atlantic Financial Group**, and third place from **Principal**.

To provide a business advocacy perspective, Tiffany Spraggins-Payne, director of Power Up Your Business, was elected by **SCORE Philadelphia Chapter and SCORE National leadership teams** to serve as a panelist for the Philadelphia, Houston, and virtual competitions. During her involvement, she lent her expertise in developing sellable and scalable business models, licensing, split revenue, joint ventures, conducting market research in various markets, and understanding economies of scale. As a result of her participation, Tiffany has expanded the reach of Community College of Philadelphia's Power Up Your Business program from hyperlocal exposure to regional and national visibility. All **Store Owner and Best Practices virtual series** are now being advertised through the **SCORE National distribution network**, casting a wider net for outreach and small business attainment in Philadelphia, PA, and beyond.



## COMMUNITY CATALYSTS: How Local Institutions Drive Economic Momentum

Community College of Philadelphia's **Power Up Your Business** program proudly partnered with **The Business Center** (TBC) in Germantown as a \$2,500 Champion Sponsor for the 2024 annual **Best Practices in Action Awards Breakfast**. Through the leadership of Tiffany Spraggins-Payne, director of Power Up Your Business, and Pam Rich-Wheeler, executive director of The Business Center, this collaboration supported 10 Power Up Peer-based Learning Experience alumni, providing them direct access to technical assistance, business development exposure, strategic networks, and entrepreneurial thought leadership.

Held in December 2024 at Arcadia University's Grey Towers Castle, the event with the theme "How I Built This" featured physician entrepreneurs Dr. Akili H. Debrady, Dr. Franklyn Scott and Power Up alumni Dr. Kennard Herring. The conversation was moderated by **WHYY-FM** host and news anchor Cherri Gregg.

Both organizations intend to maintain this partnership as a pipeline that expands technical assistance, deepens ecosystem connectivity and strengthens TBC's mission of developing entrepreneurs at scale.

Continuing this reciprocal relationship, TBC invited Power Up's leadership team, comprised of Tiffany Spraggins-Payne, director, Loren Heywood, program manager, and Christopher Hess, outreach coordinator, to serve as panelists and collaborators in its Health and Beauty Accelerator.

This accelerator included participation from the **United States Small Business Administration**, the **Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation**, the **Eastern Minority Supplier Development Council**, the **Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center**, **Bank of America** and the **Children's Hospital of Philadelphia**. Eight women-owned businesses completed the accelerator and pitched their skin and hair care product ventures, and the Power Up team then vetted them for candidacy in the Peer-based Learning Experience. This continued collaboration reinforces a shared commitment to advancing community-driven economic growth.

# POWER UP PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

*60th Street West Market Street  
Business Association*

*63rd Street Business Association*

*ACANA*

*African American Chamber of  
Commerce (PA, NJ and DE)*

*African Caribbean Business  
Council (ACBC)*

*AFRICOM*

*Asian American Chamber of  
Commerce of Greater Philadelphia*

*Beech Interplex*

*BOOST Community Development  
Corporation (CDC)*

*Business Association of West  
Parkside*

*The Business Center*

*Called to Serve CDC*

*City of Philadelphia Department of  
Commerce*

*Comcast RISE Grant Program*

*Earl Harvey (Black Professional  
News)*

*East Falls CDC*

*The Enterprise Center*

*Entrepreneur Works*

*Esperanza*

*Ethiopian Community Association  
of Greater Philadelphia*

*Fairmount CDC*

*FINANTA*

*Free Library of Philadelphia*

*Germantown United CDC*

*Greater Northeast Philadelphia  
Chamber of Commerce*

*Greater Philadelphia Hispanic  
Chamber of Commerce*

*Haitian American United for  
Change*

*Holmesburg CDC*

*I Buy Black Inc.*

*Impact Services Corporation*

*Jumpstart Germantown*

*Korean Community Development  
Services Center*

*Lancaster Avenue Business  
Association*

*Lancaster Avenue (LA) 21st Century  
Business Association CDC*

*Mayfair CDC*



*Mosaic Development Partners*

*Mt. Airy CDC*

*Newbold CDC*

*New Kensington CDC*

*NextFab*

*North 5th Street Revitalization  
Project*

*Ogontz Avenue Revitalization  
Corporation (OARC)*

*Overbrook West Neighbors CDC*

*Oxford Circle Christian Community  
Development Association*

*PACT*

*PA Professional Image Alliance*

*People's Emergency Center*

*Philadelphia Area Cooperative  
Alliance*

*Philadelphia Chinatown  
Development Corporation*

*Philadelphia Fashion Incubator*

*Philadelphia Fashion Week*

*Philadelphia OIC*

*PIDC*

*SCORE Philadelphia*

*SEAMAAC*

*South Street Headhouse District*

*Sustainable Business Network*

*Tacony CDC*

*Temple SBDC*

*The Universal Muslim Business  
Association*

*Uplift Solutions*

*Urban League of Philadelphia*

*Welcoming Center for New  
Pennsylvanians*

*West Philadelphia Corridor  
Collaborative*

*Women Business Enterprise Center  
– East*

*Women Opportunity Resource  
Center*

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# QUNE UP, INC.

## Simone Ammons, Founder and CEO

*Center City West*



### FROM PROCESS ENGINEER TO INDUSTRY INFLUENCER: SIMONE AMMONS' QUNEUP REVOLUTION

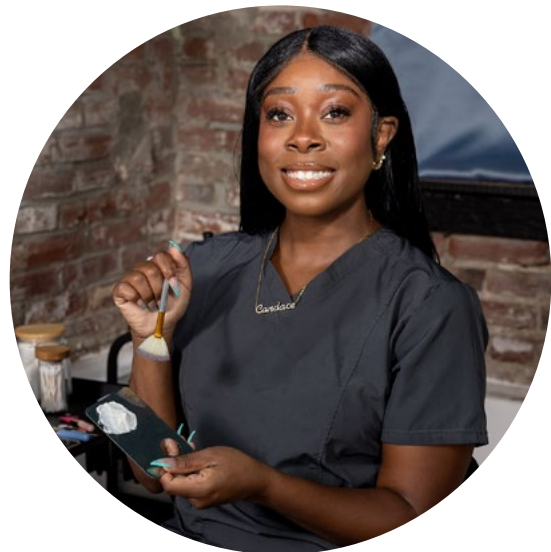
**Simone Ammons** is an established entrepreneur who strategically evolved her successful for-profit enterprise into a future-forward software line serving the biopharmaceutical manufacturing industry. QuneUp's technology leverages advanced QR code systems to give frontline teams instant access to critical equipment information, improving efficiency and accuracy in production environments. Operating from the innovation hub at Pennovation Works in West Philadelphia, Simone leads a seasoned team of experts across software engineering, marketing, accounting, legal and web development.

An esteemed graduate of the Peer-based Learning Experience, Simone credits the program with transforming her visibility and strategic approach. "Through the Peer-based Learning Experience, I gained tailored insights from globally recognized business and financial coaches that helped me refine my tactical improvement plan, build a consistent LinkedIn content strategy and dramatically elevate my presence and influence within the industry," Simone says.

The program's breakout sessions, one-on-one coaching, and accountability-driven structure gave Simone the community and actionable steps needed to strengthen her market position. QuneUp has been recognized on Technical.ly's REAllist of Philadelphia Startups on the Rise for two consecutive years, and Simone has received increased invitations to speak at industry events.

Simone remains enthusiastic about QuneUp's trajectory, committed to expanding its impact in the biopharmaceutical space while continuing to innovate for the future.

[www.quneup.com](http://www.quneup.com)





## Resource Event Partners:



[www.ccp.edu/powerup](http://www.ccp.edu/powerup)