



2024

IMPACT REPORT

Marking **20 years** of driving economic opportunity with impact, innovation, and a vision for the future.



Investing in the growth of small business

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A letter from our **FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT**

In 2024, ECDI continued to build on what we do best: expanding access to capital, growing training programs, and strengthening the systems that help small businesses succeed across our region. It was also a year of major milestones. We hosted a national lending conference, opened two new business support centers, and expanded our reach across Ohio to meet the growing demand.

Hosting the **Great Lakes Lenders Conference** in Columbus for the first time was a key milestone during our 20th anniversary year. More than 500 attendees from across the region — including CDFIs, bankers, and small business ecosystem partners — came together to connect, share insights, and learn from one another. The event created space for mission-driven lenders and large financial institutions to collaborate directly on how to better serve small business owners.

We also opened two new offices this year that reflect our long-standing commitment to meeting entrepreneurs where they are. In partnership with Wright State University, we launched Ohio's first **Veterans Business Outreach Center**, expanding our support for veterans and military families looking to start or grow small businesses across the state. In another university collaboration, we partnered with Central State University to open our fifth **Women's Business Center of Greater Dayton** — our first in collaboration with a Historically Black College or University. Both centers strengthen our ability to provide personalized, one-on-one support to entrepreneurs.

These additions are a reminder of why this work matters. When people have the chance to build something of their own, they put that energy back into their neighborhoods, their families, and their future. ECDI is committed to fostering economic development for all people, and this cycle of empowerment drives us forward, perpetuating our mission and expanding our impact across communities.

After 21 years of operations, we are proud to report that ECDI has:

- Assisted almost 33,000 entrepreneurs with training and access to capital
- Helped create or retain over 46,500 jobs
- Disbursed \$198 million in small business loan funds
- Remained the nation's number one SBA microlender for the fourth year in a row

We're grateful to everyone who helps make this work possible: our partners, funders, staff, and the entrepreneurs who put their trust in us.

Visit ecd.org/contribute to see how you can help support small businesses in your community.

Inna Kinney
Founder and Chief Executive Officer

Steve Fireman
President & General Counsel





For **two decades**, ECDI has been a committed partner to the small businesses that make up the heart of our neighborhoods and communities across the state.

What started as an idea to support immigrant entrepreneurs has grown into the country's leading SBA microlender assisting thousands of entrepreneurs.

It is through our commitment to expanding opportunities for all people that ECDI continues to evolve to meet the needs of small businesses as neighborhoods and the economy changes. We invite you to invest in our next 20 years of supporting small businesses and our neighborhoods.

REFLECTING ON CREOLE KITCHEN'S PATH WITH ECDI

After decades as a chef, Henry Butcher Sr. and his daughter Antoinette Parks opened Butcher's Creole Kitchen in 2006 but struggled to secure funding. In 2016, ECDI stepped in with a loan to cover their dining room expansion and technical assistance. Now Creole Kitchen is in the process of moving to a new mixed-use development in the historic King Lincoln Bronzeville neighborhood.

*"I attended my first business class with ECDI early on in the business, which gave me a strong foundation in defining our business's strengths and weaknesses, and how to address them appropriately. Each year I do the taxes, **I see our numbers are a little bigger, a little bigger.**"*

– Antoinette Parks, CEO of Butcher's Creole Kitchen



YEARS • 20 YEARS • 20 YEARS •

ECDI LIFETIME IMPACT

2004 – 2024



\$198M

Funds
Disbursed



8,104

Loans
Disbursed



46,544

Estimated Jobs
Created or Retained



32,957

Individuals
Assisted



ENTREPRENEURIAL SERVICES

With the business landscape changing more rapidly, entrepreneurs need more than funding to build thriving businesses. That's why we're committed to expanding our programming, offering tailored support across more industries than ever before. From expert-led training to hands-on resources and strategic connections, we're equipping business owners with the tools they need to grow sustainably. As we continue to evolve, we look forward to empowering even more entrepreneurs on their path to success.



Give Now

Help us to continue to support small business.

2024 IMPACT

Assistance and Training



7,408

Entrepreneurs
Assisted



17,019

Assistance
Hours Provided



609

Group Training
Hours Provided



3,563

Group Training
Attendees

RS · YEARS 20 · YEARS · 20 YEARS



ECDI Women's Business Centers

of Ohio

CALENDAR YEAR 2024 Impact



\$10 Million
in Capital Accessed



548
Loans Distributed



2,763
Jobs Created or
Retained



383
Active WBC
Membership



4,228
Entrepreneurs
Coached/Mentored



292
New Businesses
Created



ALIGN MASSAGE THERAPY

Ali Hull | Portsmouth

Ali Hull wasn't sure how Portsmouth would react to Align Massage Therapy. She knew how much massage could help people. She also knew not everyone saw it that way.

"Right away, I had to ask myself — will this actually work here?"

Massage therapy was often seen as a luxury. But she had seen firsthand how stress and chronic pain built up, how people pushed through discomfort because they thought they had to. She had done it herself. "When I started receiving massages myself, I realized how much it helped me find balance and alignment."

She left behind the security of a corporate job and built something that could help others the same way. "A lot of people don't realize what a difference human touch can make. It's not just physical — it's emotional. It's about feeling seen and cared for."

When Hull first reached out to ECDI, she wasn't planning on starting a wellness business — she was exploring a bar. But through the Women's Business Center of Central Appalachia, she joined the Ignite Appalachia Bootcamp and made the leap to entrepreneurship.

ECDI helped her structure her business, set pricing, and secure a loan that let her stabilize and grow. She used part of that funding to organize a downtown wellness event that brought together a dozen small businesses — and made Align part of something bigger.

"I would have never discovered this part of myself," she said.

Now, she mentors others through WBC and sees a future in Portsmouth for herself, her business, and her kids.



We're gonna continue to build on community for everybody."



FOOD BUSINESS INCUBATION SERVICES

CALENDAR YEAR 2024

Impact



139

Entrepreneurs Served



46

Jobs Created or Retained



14

Businesses Graduated



41

Group Training Hours Provided

183 Group Training Attendees



70 Hours

Of Servsafe training

53 Servsafe Certifications Issued

CONSUMER PACKAGED GOODS ACCELERATOR



16

Businesses Served



4

Business Gained Placement in Grocery Retailers



CAFÉ GRACIELA

Nora Garcia, Andres De Arco, and Edy Soray
Columbus

When their parents retired to Colombia and bought a coffee farm, three siblings, Nora Garcia, Edy Soraya, and Andres De Arco, were handed a challenge: “We have all this coffee. Y’all gotta move it,” Garcia recalls.

They weren’t coffee experts — and they weren’t even coffee drinkers. But they had dual citizenship, a family supply chain, and a shared vision. They named the business Café Graciela after their grandmother, a woman who could make a meal out of nothing.

They launched from Edy Soraya’s apartment — roasting between her couch and kitchen table, packaging orders by hand. When they got a booth at the Columbus Coffee Festival, they hoped their spiced blend, La Panelita, would stand out. It did.

“We finished making it around 2 a.m.,” Andres De Arco said. “An hour and a half into the festival, we were completely sold out.”

La Panelita became their signature product. “It was so good, so traditional to Latin America — we had to try making it ourselves,” Nora said.

Word spread fast. Customers returned. But keeping up with demand was another story.

“We got the support of ECDI. That was our first commercial kitchen,” Andres said.

Through ECDI’s Food Fort and two loans, they gained workspace, retail prep, and room to grow. “Working with Jacob helped us stay accountable... Anthony and Kathryn helped us prepare for retail,” Nora said.

They’re still figuring things out — but they know exactly where their coffee comes from, and where they want it to go.

KAIKER DEVELOPMENT + CONSTRUCTION

Kai Lewars | Cincinnati

There's no blueprint for breaking into an industry that wasn't built for you, but Kai Lewars has never followed the expected path.

He founded Kaiker Development + Construction to shape communities, not just build structures. From day one, he positioned Kaiker as a developer and construction manager—taking full responsibility for curating and leading projects rather than working under larger firms. It wasn't the easiest route, but for Lewars, there wasn't another option.

He got his start by volunteering on development projects and listening more than talking. "A lot of developers come in with their own vision of what a community should look like. I don't. I listen first."



ECDI not only helped us directly—it's helping us help others, too."

That approach stuck with him. In Lower Price Hill — a neighborhood where he once lived — Kaiker is now leading a historic tax credit renovation that preserves the area's character while creating new housing opportunities.

Shifting from independent contractor to leading full-scale development projects required more than skill; it required financial stability. ECDI helped Kaiker secure small business loans and connected Lewars to funding programs that strengthened his operations. With that foundation, he built a structured firm with benefits, expanded his team, and took on larger projects.

Now, Kaiker is making a lasting impact, creating housing opportunities while preserving community character.



ECDI CONTRACTOR RESOURCE CENTER

CALENDAR YEAR 2024

Impact



229

Businesses Served



61

Entrepreneurs Coached/Mentored



EXPANDING SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURS IN OHIO

In 2024, ECDI expanded its reach with two major initiatives: launching Ohio's first Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) at Wright State University and opening the Women's Business Center (WBC) of Greater Dayton at Central State University - Dayton. These centers provide critical training, mentorship, and capital to help more entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses.

By growing our service footprint and deepening our partnerships, we continue to invest in the success of small businesses statewide. Whether through veteran-focused resources, women-centered programming, or access to responsible funding, ECDI remains steadfast in ensuring every entrepreneur—regardless of background—has the opportunity to build a sustainable business and contribute to Ohio's economic growth.

Veterans Business Outreach Center of Ohio

With support from an SBA grant, the VBOC at Wright State University equips veterans and military spouses with essential business resources, from financial planning to government contracting assistance. Located near Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the VBOC will serve as a critical resource, offering business planning assistance, guidance on securing government contracts, and support through programs like Boots to Business.

WBC of Greater Dayton

ECDI's fifth WBC—and the first in partnership with an HBCU—expands opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Based at CSU-Dayton, it offers business training, networking, and accessible funding, empowering more small business owners in Ohio.

This new center reflects our dedication to fostering small business growth by providing essential resources, including workshops, networking, and access to responsible funding.



New Funder Spotlight

S&T BANK

“S&T is a community-minded bank that works closely with local organizations providing financial support as well as employee volunteerism. This people-forward focus makes our partnership with ECDI a great working relationship that supports businesses and individuals in securing vital capital in the Central and Northeast Ohio regions. We have supported ECDI through financial education, service, and also provided assistance during events such as the Great Lakes Lenders Conference and the WBC of Northern Ohio’s In the Company of Women event. We’ve been proud to help eliminate financial obstacles and support small businesses. We look forward to further collaboration with ECDI in the future.”



“ECDI supports the start-up and entrepreneurial community.”

They provide working capital to businesses and individuals that traditional banking may be unable to support and also provide a pathway to traditional banking via capital investment and education.

The team at ECDI is aligned with S&T Bank’s people-forward purpose in helping Ohioans reach their goals and achieve success. Whether it’s supporting food truck operations, women-owned business or serving Veteran and minority-owned businesses, **ECDI is a great example of what happens when teams collaborate and commit to a common purpose of serving others.**

S&T is proud to partner with ECDI and we encourage anyone seeking to invest in Ohio’s future to consider supporting their mission to create positive social and economic change.”

– **Dave Antolik** | S&T Bank president



SMALL BUSINESS LENDING

Celebrating **20 years** of impact, ECDI is proud to be recognized as the nation's top U.S. Small Business Administration microlender for the fourth year in a row. This achievement underscores our dedication to fostering entrepreneurial success by delivering the resources and guidance that help small businesses thrive.



“ECDI didn’t just give me a loan. They checked in on me. They made sure I was okay. They supported me.”

AMARYLLIS BEAUTE HAVEN

Selena Barabino | Toledo

Selena Barabino founded Amaryllis Beaute Haven to offer beauty transformations and weight loss management with the same compassion she once brought to patient care as a trauma nurse. Faced with financial hurdles and a bank rejection, she turned to ECDI, which not only provided funding but also mentorship to help her scale sustainably. Now, she’s growing her business thoughtfully and continuing her mission to restore confidence and healing beyond the surface.



Scan to read the full story

Or visit [ECDI.org/amaryllis](https://www.ecdi.org/amaryllis)



TATI STUDIO

Tetiana Saeed | Cleveland

Tetiana Saeed didn't expect to start over — not at this stage in her life, and not in a country where she barely spoke the language. But when war came to Ukraine, she and her family had no choice.

“We left with two bags. I packed for my son, for my mother — but nothing for myself.”

After weeks trapped in their city, they escaped with help from volunteers and eventually landed in Ohio. Saeed had spent decades building her career as a hairdresser. But to work in Ohio, she needed a U.S. cosmetology license — and it took eight months to get approved.

“When I finally got my license, I felt like I could breathe again.”

She took a job at Ulta Beauty but missed working for herself. That's when she found Boris

at ECDI — someone she kept hearing about in the Ukrainian community. “Everybody knows Boris.”

He walked her through every step: her business plan, pricing, paperwork. “I didn't think it would be possible. But it was simple. No stress.”

With a \$10,000 ECDI loan, she joined Infusion Salon in Broadview Heights, then launched Tati Studio in 2023. She now serves clients who, like her, left everything behind — offering familiar techniques, in their language, with no need to explain.



“I didn't think it would be possible, but it was simple. No stress.”

She's working, growing, and planning what's next. “The most important thing,” she said, “is that I feel free.”

LADYFISH AQUATICS

Lorieal Kimble | Dayton

Lorieal Kimble got her first fish tank when she was nine — a ten-gallon starter tank. Then a fifteen. Then a fifty-five. Then a seventy-five. She loved everything about them: the color, the movement, the calm. Fish became more than a hobby — they were part of her life.

But the deeper she got into aquatics, the murkier the industry looked. “These divers use cyanide to sedate the fish and other animals. Then they just scoop them up,” she said. “But it damages their livers. You can tell — fish at the bottom of a tank at most pet stores, sitting there, staring at the glass.”

That was the starting point for Ladyfish Aquatics, the specialty fish store she built with her husband, Chris — focused on ethically sourced, sustainably cared-for aquatic life.

“This business is not just a money maker,” Chris said. “We have a vested interest in it.”

It took four years to build, including one just for renovations. They had financing for the space, but needed help making it functional. That’s where ECDI came in.

“Catherine and Ella at the Women’s Business Center took great care of us... They were a true blessing,” Kimble said.

From supplier standards to customer education, everything at Ladyfish is built with care.

Kimble’s father ran a trusted orthopedic shop for decades. Now, she and Chris are doing the same.



“If we’re going to do it, we’re going to do it the only way — the right way.”





ECDI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Calendar Year 2024

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MMELO

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ECDI

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THANK YOU

to our funders

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Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses at Tri-C Cleveland

The Greater Cincinnati Foundation

Growth Opportunity Partners

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iBusiness Funding

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Jellum Law

JobsOhio

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U.S. Small Business Administration

United Midwest Savings Bank

United States Department of Agriculture

U.S. Bank

Verizon

Woodforest Bank



Partner Spotlight

U.S. BANK

In December 2023, ECDI secured a significant private grant from U.S. Bank, known as the Opportunity Funds. This partnership represents a pivotal investment in ECDI's mission to empower local entrepreneurs and foster community economic development. The funding expands ECDI's lending and programmatic activities, crucially supporting small businesses in accessing capital and fostering growth.

The Opportunity Fund program not only boosts ECDI's lending capacity but also supports advocacy and policy initiatives to increase funding opportunities, enhance lending transparency, and explore sustainable, green lending practices. Moving forward, ECDI will continue collaborating closely with U.S. Bank to maximize the program's impact, driving positive economic change across our communities.



“Supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses can help drive economic growth and build thriving communities. **We're proud to collaborate with organizations like ECDI that are working to create access and opportunities for more people to make their business dreams a reality.**”

- Alicia Townsend | Community Affairs Manager at U.S. Bank

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES AND ENTREPRENEURS ACHIEVING SUCCESS

As a leading small business resource center in Ohio, ECDI relies on support from individuals, corporate, and community partners to continue providing business coaching, financial literacy, and access to capital for small businesses throughout the state. For over 20 years, ECDI has helped thousands of entrepreneurs achieve their dreams and will continue into the future.



GIVE NOW
ecd.org/contribute



VOLUNTEER
ecd.org/pan

You too can help small businesses succeed!

- Shop local! Support the local businesses in your area.
- Donate to ECDI to continue providing valuable resources.
- Volunteer as a subject matter expert or advisory board member.

LOCATIONS

ECDI Columbus Headquarters
Lending Office, WBC, Food Fort

Akron/Canton
Lending Field Office

Cleveland
Lending Office, WBC

Cincinnati
Lending Office, WBC

Dayton
WBC, VBOC, CRC

Portsmouth
Lending Office, WBC

Toledo
Lending Field Office

