INSPIRED LEADERS
SHAPING CITIES

HIIVE (HUB FOR INCLUSIVITY, INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP)

SUMMARY

Charlotte Center City Partners

CITY:	Charlotte
STATE/PROVINCE:	North Carolina
COUNTRY:	U.S.
ORGANIZATION BUDGET:	$250,000
PROJECT COST:	$250,000
START DATE:	10/9/23
END DATE:	N/A

DESCRIPTION

HIIVE (Hub for Inclusivity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship) in the Market at 7th Street (The Market) is a small business incubator program focused on providing education, networking, and access to opportunities for diverse businesses within the food and retail sectors. The program leverages Charlotte Center City Partners (CCCP)'s existing small business infrastructure, including The Market, Tryon Street Vendor Program, Small Business Saturday and Food Truck Program to provide needed capacity and access for small business development. The goal is to serve the unique needs of people of color, women and/or veteran entrepreneurs looking to operate in Center City.

Through collaboration with corporate and education partners HIIVE provides a foundation business curriculum to cohorts of 20 entrepreneurs, including marketing, access to capital, small business finance and human resources. Each class is paired with local partners with unique operating insights to Center City. The uniquely tailored discussions daylight local brokers, experts working with unhoused neighbors, pop-up curators, social media influencers, research and data nerds and influential corporate representatives.

A key part to the incubator program is two new spaces in The Market. CCCP has operated The Market since 2010 and currently provides below-market rent for approximately 15 small diverse businesses in Center City. Two HIIVE entrepreneurs from each cohort can gain operational experience and enhance connections with other entrepreneurs in the Market and Center City through a six-month rent covered space at the Market. In addition to the two new spaces, the HIIVE cohort has prioritized access to additional pop-up opportunities within CCCP's small business infrastructure.

INNOVATION

The HIIVE program is innovative because it markets to potential new small business looking to come to Center City, leverages multiple existing small business infrastructure pieces, utilizes custom built curriculum and provides access opportunities for rent-covered spaces in the Market as well as additional spaces throughout Center City.

One key, unexpected impact from all these innovations is that a strong sense of community was built between a diverse set of small businesses that already existed in the Market and Center City and ones that are interested in locating and growing in Center City. The mixture of existing and new businesses created a strong sense of community and additional innovations across the small business ecosystem.

HIIVE in the Market also created additional access opportunities for small businesses. Due to the unique mix of spaces and events CCCP operates 70% of HIIVE participants have had opportunities to pop up across Center City. Opportunities include additional spaces and/or events in the Market, Holiday Market on Tryon, Shout!, and Shop Small Saturdays.

OUTCOME

HIIVE strengthened the business acumen of the entrepreneurs for their continued success. They were able to ask questions and get insights specific to their business from a wide range of business and community professionals. The program mitigates the issue of inequitable access to opportunities and vital connections for businesses owned by women and people of color. The businesses were able to not only learn about other small business resources in our community but make one-on-one personal connections through networking opportunities.

Participants received knowledge of how to operate in Center City as well as receiving actual operation experience from small businesses in The Market. Two entrepreneurs received the larger opportunity of operating rent covered within The Market and learning from existing, neighboring businesses.

The Market had tried similar education programs with existing members before with limited success. HIIVE benefited The Market allowing existing businesses to connect with new entrepreneurs and leverage the excitement of new businesses popping up at the Market. The HIIVE participants benefited from being in The Market by tapping into a wealth of experience and leveraging The Market's consistency of experience and brand. HIIVE and The Market is still operating and will continue through grant and sponsorship funding.

EXECUTION

Since 2010, The Market has incubated 35+ small businesses with these characteristics: 70% participation from businesses owned by people of color and/or women. The Market currently has a 60% business success rate, which exceeds restaurant and retail sector trends. Throughout these initial fourteen years of The Market, there was never an impactful incubator program until HIIVE.

HIIVE began with a City of Charlotte grant for organizations supporting the small business ecosystem. Upon earning the grant, CCCP created an educational program by reaching out to collaborative partners to assist with teaching. Each class was paired with community partners enhancing the experience with expertise about Center City. Applications opened, and CCCP reached out to small business partners focusing on businesses owned by people of color, women, and/or veterans.

An internal committee reviewed 40+ applications and narrowed it to twenty small businesses. Nine weeks of classes took place within the Market every other Monday. The entrepreneurs in the cohort applied for the two 6-month operating spaces in the Market. Simultaneously, a design firm built two new spaces within the Market.

The first HIIVE cohort concluded with graduation at UNC Charlotte, celebration at the Market, and announcing the two new business in the Market.

REPRESENTATION

One of the goals of the program was to not only provide educational support, but also help small businesses become more aware of the resources available to them. CCCP partnered with a small women owned business, SkillPop, to provide several classes as well as corporate partners, including Bank of America. HIIVE also had a mixer, which included 16 small business resource partners with a focus on businesses owned by people of color, women and/or veterans to personally connect with HIIVE entrepreneurs.

Out of the 19 businesses who completed the first cohort 74% were women-owned and 79% are operated by people of color.

REPLICATION

HIIVE and The Market are something that could be modified to exist within other cities. Downtown associations have a unique understanding of how to operate small businesses within their respective communities. They can leverage this knowledge as well as existing partnerships to help connect small businesses with education, networking connections, and opportunities to operate within their city.

COMPLEXITY/SIMPLICITY

One of the challenges was providing a distinctive set of small business educational classes. CCCP worked to find a solution by pairing educational partners who already provided educational classes and combining them in unique ways to meet desired outcomes – aligning small business with the business of Center City.

Another challenge was working with many different partners to avoid the program feeling disjointed. Some of the partners were also not necessarily accustomed to working with the mix of entrepreneurs in the class and the program needed a more customized approach. CCCP solved this by providing internal cohesive project management of the program. Before each class teachers received a list of participating businesses as well as key stats to help them best understand the participants and better prepare to engage them in class. Each participating partner received a class framework which included a detailed timeline, room layout, and overall picture of the flow of the class.

The classes also took place during open hours of The Market in order to mitigate distractions and add activity to a lower attendance night at The Market.

Qcity metro

Qcity Biz

New program offers training, operating space for small businesses

A nine-week program will provide industry experts to help owners of small businesses improve their operational skills.



by Jalon Hill
August 16, 2023



Charlotte Center City Partners has launched a new program that will provide training and operating s for entrepreneurs who own food and retail businesses.

Privacy - Terms

The Charlotte Hub for Inclusivity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (HIIVE) program is a nine-week program where 24 small business owners work with industry experts to improve their marketing techniques, sales strategies, capital access and networking opportunities.

Why it matters: This program aims to support underrepresented business owners adapting to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Any business that went into the pandemic that was already underserved or underresourced, they had a really hard time,” James LaBar, the SVP of economic development for Charlotte Center City Partners, told QCity Metro.

“This program is a real support piece to help small businesses become more resilient,”

The first cohort begins courses in October 2023 and concludes in February 2024. HIIVE courses and events are held at the **Market at 7th Street**.

Two businesses will be selected among the group to be housed at the Market at 7th Street for six months rent-free, LaBar said.

LaBar said this would provide the businesses to meet a new customer base and the Market customers to support a new business.

The resource hub prioritizes supporting small businesses owned by people of color, women, and/or veterans with the aspiration of expanding and opening a brick-and-mortar.

Applications are open, and inspiring participants must **apply** by September 4. Tuition for those accepted into the HIIVE program is $150.

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HIIVE Educational Program



Jamie Hundley &
James LaBar

Charlotte Center City Partners

HIIVE : Overview

- Background Information
- By the Numbers
- Calendar
- Program Structure
- Celebratory Events
- Entrepreneurial Community
- Program Impact



Charlotte Center City Partners

Background Information/ Program Justification



Hive is a small business incubator focused on providing education and operating space opportunities to food and retail based businesses.

The program allowed participants to:

- Receive small business **education**
- Learn how to best **operate** and align their business with the business of center city Charlotte
- **Network** with industry professionals, small business education providers, Charlotte Center City Partners, and other entrepreneurs within Center City
- Opportunity for two businesses per cohort to **operate** in a brick-and-mortar space within the Market at 7th St.

HIIVE by the Numbers

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19 Small Business Entrepreneurs

- Demographics
  - 74% Women Owned
  - 79% Owned by people of color
- Sector
  - 63% F&B
  - 21% Retail
  - 16% Services



Overall Calendar

Timeframe	First Cohort Milestones
6/1/23-8/1/23	Development of a curriculum and materials
	Invitations to our partners and industry professionals
	Advertising and Inviting food based small businesses to apply
9/1/2023	Application Deadline
9/4/2023- 9/18/23	Internal review process of applicants
10/9/23- 3/18/24	Business and industry-specific classes, networking opportunities, and mentorship
10/9/23	Class One: Intro and Entrepreneurial Leadership
10/23/23	Class Two: Marketing Essentials
11/6/23	Class Three: Social Media
12/4/23	Class Four: Successful Sales Strategies/ Networking Opportunity
12/18/23	Class Five: Access to Capital/ Small Business Resource Mixer
1/8/24	Class Six: Small Business Finance
1/22/24	Class Seven: Networking and Agreements/ Broker Discussion
2/5/24	Class Eight: Human Resources and Staffing
2/19/24	Class Nine: Small Business Law
2/26/24	Graduation

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Class Structure

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Class:

- Each Class will have 45- 60 minutes of small business curriculum content

Structured Discussion:

- Each class will have 30- 45 mins of structured discussion
- Opportunity to showcase Center City Partners staff expertise in operating a business within the unique ecosystem of Uptown
- Invite other partners to provide customized content relevant to operating within our unique environment
- Allow class participants to ask questions to best apply content to their business





Celebratory Events

Networking Events: Small business Resource Mixer

- One events per cohort
- Hosted at The Market at 7th Street
- Opportunity for participants to connect with each other as well as other stakeholders that help small businesses

Additional Opportunities

- Opportunity for Partners to engage with class participants and provide additional content via speaking opportunities and networking



Celebratory Events

Graduation Ceremony

- Hosted at a local University UNC Charlotte
- Opportunity for participants to celebrate small business participants with key stakeholders including CCCP, education partners, and City of Charlotte team
- Keynote Presented by Brant Bronico from Charlotte FC







HIIVE Opportunities

Operational Opportunities

- 70% of Entrepreneurs in HIIVE received opportunities to operate within our Center City
  - Center City Partners Events
  - Market at 7th Street

Community

- Community of entrepreneurs supporting each other





HIIVE Social Media Impact

HIIVE Entrepreneurs

- Operational Opportunities: Peaceware
- Operational Opportunities: West and Remount
- Program Launch: West and Remount
- Graduation Celebration: Flows Grand
- Graduation: Urban Sweets
- Graduation: Tone and Tap

HIIVE Partners

- SkillPop
- CLIMB
- HIIVE Teacher: Katie Mckiever

HIIVE Social Media Impact

Charlotte Center City Partners

- Program Launch: Linkedin
- Graduation: Twitter
- Graduation: Linkedin

Market at 7th Street

- Program Launch
- Graduation



Market at 7th Street Impact

- As part of this project two new spaces are being built in a food hall we have managed since 2010
- The Market at 7th Street currently provides subsidized rent for small diverse businesses in the heart of our center city.
- Two HIIVE participants from each cohort will have the opportunity to gain operational experience through a six-month rent covered, pop-up opportunity at the Market at 7th Street.



