



U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Foundation

BizConnect Local: San Antonio

Impact Report

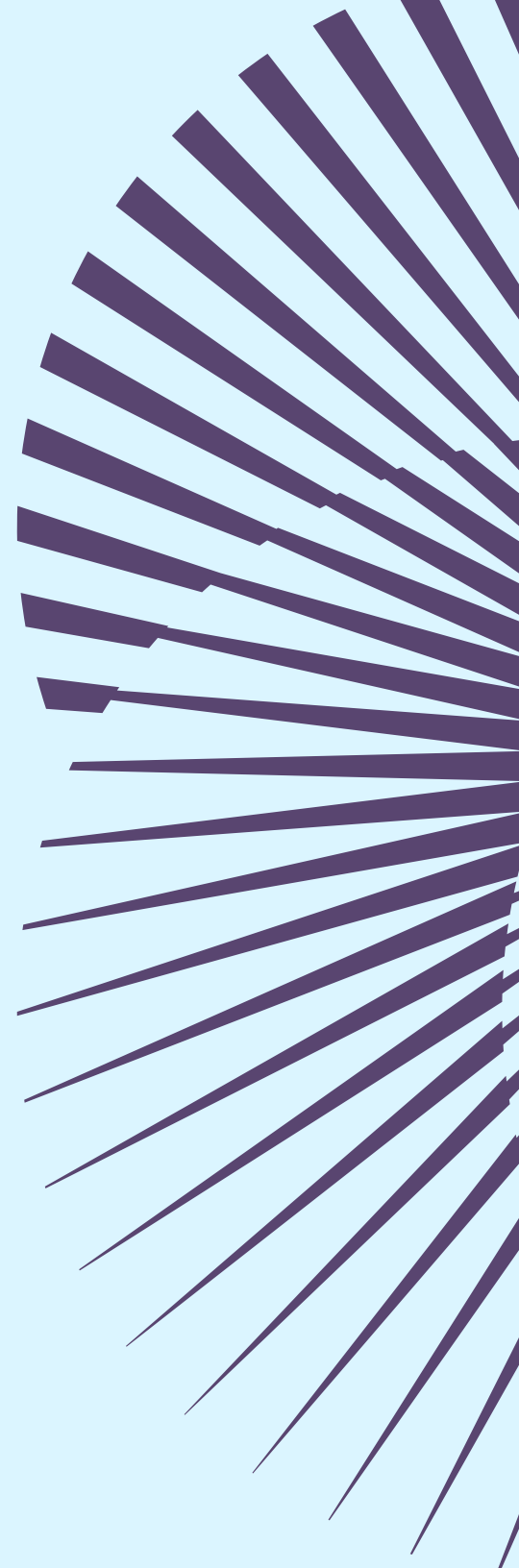
In Partnership With



**The Greater
San Antonio
Chamber**

With Support From

BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation





Small businesses are the backbone of our communities and essential to the prosperity of our nation. At the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, we're helping strengthen local communities by fueling the growth of small businesses through our BizConnect Local program.

Designed by the U.S. Chamber Foundation with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, BizConnect Local is a development and mentorship program for small businesses in economically distressed areas. Partnering with local chambers of commerce, we provide small business owners with coaching, networking opportunities, and financial assistance to advance their economic success and resiliency.



Supporting Local Communities Through Small Business Growth

In 2023, we launched our pilot program in partnership with the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce to support small businesses in San Antonio. Participants received access to:

1

Mentorship

Participants were connected with local business leaders and entrepreneurs who offered guidance to help grow their business.

2

Expert-Led Classes

Small business owners completed eight in-person classes, hosted by a business coach with subject matter experts, that covered key business concepts, such as building resiliency, generating revenue, and more.

3

Business Coaching

Participants received a one-on-one business coaching session on building capacity, tailored to their unique needs.

4

Networking

The program provided opportunities for small business owners to meet with local leaders and build connections to relevant stakeholders in their community.

5

Financial Assistance

Small businesses received \$3,500 to help support their most immediate needs.



Who We Helped

23 businesses

were selected to participate in BizConnect Local: San Antonio and came from a variety of industries and levels of experience.

Businesses ranged from less than one year old to 27 years in existence, with an average of:

6 years

They employed an average of 5 employees.

Industries included:



CONSTRUCTION



RETAIL



EDUCATION



PERSONAL SERVICES



HEALTHCARE



FOOD AND HOSPITALITY



IT



REAL ESTATE

More than 50%

of participants serve both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) clients.

Top Challenges

Prior to starting BizConnect Local: San Antonio, participants expressed a variety of challenges that they were facing, with cash flow and access to capital being some of the most common issues.

Cash flow

48%

Access to capital

38%

Finding customers

33%

Inflation

29%

Supply chain disruption

14%

Recruiting employees

10%

Our Impact

BizConnect Local: San Antonio participants experienced significant improvements in their businesses. On average, business employee counts increased by 20% by the end of the program. In addition, optimism about the future of their business stayed strong throughout the program, with participants ranking their optimism at nine on a 10-point scale (with 10 being extremely optimistic).

Reasons cited for their continued optimism include the positive impact that the BizConnect Local program had on them, the implementation of strategies and tools they learned, and the strength of their products and teams.

How We Helped

BizConnect Local: San Antonio participants made several changes to their businesses because of the program, including:

Enhancements in planning, branding, and marketing strategies.

Improvements in financial management and operational efficiency, including the adoption of new systems and processes.

Investment in professional services and staff training to improve business functions and customer service.

Renewed emphasis on networking, community involvement, and building relationships with clients.

Organizational changes aimed at streamlining business operations.



Insights for Success

Participants gained crucial lessons to help grow their business, such as the importance of strategic thinking and planning to ensure business growth and sustainability, the value of networking to explore avenues for new opportunities and learning, and the need for a competent team and delegating operational tasks, among other insights.

When asked to rate the extent that BizConnect Local had benefited their business, participants gave the program a

9 out of 10

on average, indicating that the program was extremely beneficial to their business.



What Our Participants Are Saying

“BizConnect has been tremendously beneficial. I have started tracking my sales efforts (e.g., calls, meetings, outreach) using a spreadsheet our business coach created, in an effort to better understand what is most effective. I’ve incorporated AI into my workflow and have made a strategic marketing plan using email marketing and social media. I’ve also scheduled days where our team can brainstorm ideas in a fun location to help with company culture.”

Heather Chandler
Owner of The IMG Studio

“I have made so many changes and implemented plans and standard operating procedures since the start of BizConnect. I’ve developed a new bookkeeping approach and know when I need to hire help. I gained clarity on what I want to focus on growing next and I’ve developed three new marketing strategies. I’ve met incredible people to network and build relationships with.”

Megan Blount
Owner of Expat Property Tours LLC

“I’ve become more cognizant of my profit margins, my pressure points, and my individual strengths. I have been given the tools to better organize and streamline my operations. I feel like I have a better system for future planning.”

Meredith Alvarez
Owner of Bell Papel and Bell Flor

Learn More

Visit uschamberfoundation.org/bizconnect to learn more and get involved.