ENTREPRENEURS MAKE IT WORK

Whew, it’s been quite the year. In some ways a return to normal, in some ways a continuation of the ups, downs, and unknowns of the past few years.

We served 48 new ventures – three communities, 39 sessions, 75+ mentors, 50+ additional skilled volunteers, and hundreds of community members and friends. And weathered the inevitable pivots caused by cases and closures. We met alumni’s enthusiastic and urgent needs with a mix of professional services, monthlong legal workshops, market-making, and slate of Emory Executive Education short courses. We served over 100 alumni and gave our business to local underrepresented service providers.

We as a community have not moved beyond the impacts of the pandemic. For Start:ME alumni, 45% of sales are still down, 44% have still cut hours or remain closed. But the optimism is there, the seeking of opportunity is there. We saw a record number access capital, hire a first employee, or open a brick & mortar space this year. Many have revamped, rebuilt, and relaunched. They found the niches, weathered the unknowns, and created their own successes.

If the past three years have taught us anything, it’s to embrace both that uncertainty and that opportunity. We celebrate entrepreneurs’ journeys and feel honored to walk alongside them.

— Erin for the Start:ME team – Alina, Dylan, Fran, Kareem, MaríA, Mercedes, and Sushma
WHAT WE DO

Start:ME strengthens underserved communities in metro Atlanta by empowering entrepreneurs to start and grow resilient microbusinesses. When they thrive – generating income, creating jobs, occupying spaces, providing role models – their neighborhoods do too. Start:ME provides business training, mentorship, and grant investment capital, coupled with ongoing alumni support.

OUR OUTCOMES

Since 2013, we’ve built a community that is helping entrepreneurs thrive.

- **351** microbusinesses served
- **$14.7M** annual revenue
- **566** jobs created or retained
- **83%** ventures led by people of color
- **71%** female-led businesses
- **75+** volunteer mentors
- **65** brick and mortars
- **67%** alumni actively operating
- **$322K** capital awarded
Entrepreneurship is a team sport. Start:ME is delivered by Emory University’s Goizueta Business School in partnership with trusted community lead nonprofit organizations. Together we build ecosystems, businesses, and communities.

Start:ME is made possible through the generous support of our donor partners.

SUPPORTERS

LEAD DELIVERY PARTNERS
"Start:ME truly motivates and celebrates individuals, creating a positive environment for all. The program provides entrepreneurs with tools that are helpful and meaningful."

— Amita McClain | Start:ME Clarkston mentor
In partnership with Friends of Refugees, Start:ME Clarkston supports local entrepreneurs from all backgrounds. Since 2013, Start:ME has served 146 local businesses that reflect and embrace the city’s diverse skills, abilities, and offerings.

"Start:ME guided me through the process of creating a business plan, pitching for my business, and provided me with useful information about funding and the legal aspects of setting-up a business. This would have been enough but what I found most valuable and exciting was the opportunity to connect with others at all stages of the entrepreneurial journey. Business information is everywhere but inspiration and camaraderie are priceless!"

— Sharon Newton-Denson | Silk and Yarn, Clarkston 2022
In partnership with the East Lake Foundation, Start:ME has been working in the East Lake, Edgewood, and Kirkwood communities since 2015. The 128 local businesses Start:ME has served to date bring economic and social vibrancy to the community and its members.

**THE STATISTICS**

- 128 MICROBUSINESSES SERVED
- $5.7M IN ANNUAL REVENUES
- 231 JOBS CREATED / RETAINED
- 19 BRICK AND MORTARS

**OUR COALITION**

"I was surprised that I could finally articulate and decide things about my business I’d been keeping vague and broad in my own mind. I was also surprised by how nurturing and supportive every single person was - staff, mentors, fellow entrepreneurs, local experts, visiting community members - just WOW. Everyone was incredibly generous with their time and information."

— Stephanie Howard | Stephanie Howard Photography, East Lake 2022
In partnership with Focused Community Strategies and Purpose Built Schools Atlanta, Start:ME Southside supports a diverse collection of in-town neighborhoods. The 77 local businesses Start:ME has served to date tap into the energy of Atlanta’s Southside.

**THE STATISTICS**

- **77** microbusinesses served
- **$3.1M** in annual revenues
- **123** jobs created / retained
- **29** peer-selected for grant capital

**OUR COALITION**

“Start:ME has been a game changer for me as an entrepreneur. It helped me to address things in my business that I knew were important, but I kept putting off. It also opened my eyes to areas of business ownership that I was not aware of, and helped me develop the knowledge and skills to address those areas.”

— Natasha Thornton | Black Education is LIT, Southside 2022
At 1-4 employees, microbusinesses are individually quite small. But collectively, micro is big. According to The Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO), microbusinesses account for 92% of all U.S. businesses and create 41.3 million jobs.

You may be wondering how you, as one person, can make a difference. Just as microbusinesses together move markets, intentional consumers, volunteers, and donors create momentous impact. So what can you do?

**Shop intentionally**
Spend money at local small businesses

**Volunteer your time**
Share your time, energy, and talents

**Advocate**
Push for truly inclusive policies and resources

**Invest**
Donate money towards causes you support and champion

**Multiply your impact**
Encourage others in your networks to do the same

Your contributions, combined with the contributions of many, have a macro impact on microbusinesses.

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