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## Youth Entrepreneurship:

### A Call to Action

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The Generation E Institute

2014 Co-Learning Plan Series

MSU EDA University Center for Regional Economic Innovation

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
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and Engagement

# Youth Entrepreneurship: A Call to Action

*Michigan State University*

*Center for Community and Economic Development*

*EDA University Center for Regional Economic Innovation*

**Ocie Irons**  
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*The Generation E Institute*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the unsure economy we live in today, entrepreneurship continues to be a bright light on the economic horizon. With everyone discussing that a fresh start for Detroit means entering uncharted territory, two strategies need to be utilized to respond to Detroit's current challenges—the need to attract new businesses to its communities and to employ a plan that encourages business creation, retention and expansion.

The fact that entrepreneurs are the primary source of work place innovation, wealth creation and job generation for the US economy is well known. But the belief that youth entrepreneurship education programs are a critical part of those comprehensive economic development plans is far less applied in local communities.

Generation E Institute (GenEI) has developed and tested a proven successful Five Step Approach to engage youth in the process of community and economic development through youth entrepreneurship education. An entrepreneurial mind-set must be cultivated and nurtured in our communities. Our young people need to be equipped with the tools to “create a job, not just take a job.” GenEI is doing this by engaging communities in the process of tailoring and integrating proven entrepreneurship curricula into youth-focused activities and missions. The contribution of youth entrepreneurship education to the maturing of the entrepreneurial ecosystem is a logical addition to the Detroit economy.

GenEI works with communities to provide youth with the opportunity to develop business skills, operate business ventures, and to become equipped with the knowledge needed to compete and contribute to our communities ever changing societal needs. It is a systematic approach that connects youth with community leaders, business owners, and local economic development agencies. This networking process develops lasting relationships through mentoring, coaching and volunteerism. By making a significant connection within their communities, young people are seeing increased opportunities.

The research from this proposal will gather the necessary information with a focus on southeast Michigan. After thorough examination of the data, GenEI will determine if this region is in a position - and interested - in moving forward to expand youth entrepreneurship education. Knowing that job creation is essential to community sustainability and growth, doing research to determine a community's interest and readiness to expand youth entrepreneurship education will be beneficial to schools, community organizations, government agencies, and economic development corporations as they move forward in today's ever-changing economy. The research will be analyzed, synthesized, and formatted in a manner that can be reported and shared with others desiring to ascertain the current climate in Detroit for youth entrepreneurial development. This information, gathered purposefully, will identify lead organizations that are interested and ready to begin the Five Step Approach, and ultimately educate youth to the idea of job creation, teaching communication, soft skills, business and financial plans, and ultimately a new business venture. Whether a young person leans towards becoming an entrepreneur or an intrapreneur, he/she will be equipped with the skills to be an economically contributing citizen.

This research will enable GenEI to glean the data that can then be replicated to serve any community and economic development organization. This data will determine what information is needed to approach a community, how to gather the information from schools and community organizations, citizen goals, youth goals, and to find the commonalities that can gather a community into a productive conversation.

## WHY YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Developing an entrepreneurial mindset in youth is imperative to prepare them for an ever changing economy. The study Entrepreneurship Education (Marques, Ferreira, Gomes, Rodrigues, 2012) argues that entrepreneurship education should start as early as possible, especially at the high school level. High school students are about to make decisions regarding their work lives and thus the exposure to entrepreneurship should be a career choice, as part of any career pathway.<sup>(6)</sup>

Entrepreneurial curricula help students to develop “soft skills” that many employers indicate are missing in the prospective employee pool. In a 2008 report, The Aspen Institute’s Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy Group agreed, stating “According to many observers, an entrepreneurial mindset – a critical mix of success-oriented attitudes of initiative, intelligent risk-taking, collaboration, and opportunity recognition – is the missing ingredient. This “skills crisis” is becoming a critical issue because the American economy is shifting. Not only will the traditional skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic be needed to thrive in this economy, but also technological savvy and self-direction. With the pace of innovation, many of the jobs our children will hold do not even exist yet and more than ever, we need to educate students to be continual learners.”<sup>(7)</sup>

A Conference Board Key Findings report based on *Ready to Innovate: Are Educators and Executives Aligned on the Creative Readiness of the American Workforce?* Eighty-five percent of employers say they cannot find the applicants they seek.<sup>(13)</sup> Employers say problem-identification or articulation best demonstrates creativity, while school superintendents rank it ninth. Superintendents rank problem-solving first; employers rank it eighth. These discrepancies bolster the view that while schools teach students how to solve problems put before them, the business sector requires workers who can identify the problems in the first place.<sup>(14)</sup>

Encouraging Future Innovation: Youth Entrepreneurship Education (ODEP) cites *Logic Models and Outcomes for Youth Entrepreneurship Programs (2001)*, a report by the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Corporation, reveals positive outcomes of entrepreneurial education of youth, such as:

- improved academic performance, school attendance; and educational attainment
- increased problem-solving and decision-making abilities
- improved interpersonal relationships, teamwork, money management, and public speaking skills
- job readiness
- enhanced social psychological development (self-esteem, ego development, self-efficacy), and
- perceived improved health status

Additionally, ongoing research commissioned by the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) found that when youth participated in entrepreneurship programs:

- interest in attending college increased 32 percent
- occupational aspirations increased 44 percent
- independent reading increased 4 percent
- leadership behavior increased 8.5 percent and
- belief that attaining one's goals is within one's control (locus of control) increased”<sup>(8)</sup>

The evidence for positive effects of youth entrepreneurship is compelling.

## **YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MICHIGAN**

The slow recovery of the U.S. economy following the Great Recession has focused federal and state governments on solutions. The Center for Michigan, in 10,000 Voices, described a 10-point plan for the state's recovery. Two of those points speak to Generation E's mission and approach.

The first, "Create a More Business Friendly, Entrepreneurial Environment", describes Michiganders' desire to see "better connection between education and the jobs of the new economy. In K-12, they want intensified focus on critical thinking skills to strengthen adaptability and problem-solving. In higher education, they want expanded entrepreneurial studies and nimble updating of programs to adjust to economic change and provide graduates who can quickly flow into Michigan's workforce and remain in the state."<sup>(11)</sup>

The second point, "Change How and What Schools Teach" speaks to the curricula and its relevance in the opinions of the Michiganders surveyed. "Citizens want an improved K-12 curriculum. Curriculum ideas discussed most often include classes that prepare students for the real world and careers (financial literacy, economics, civics, entrepreneurialism); emphasizing critical thinking and creativity rather than rote learning; greater focus on the arts and languages as well as science, technology, and math; and less teaching to standardized tests."<sup>(12)</sup>

## **TRADITIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS**

GenEI believes in establishing a framework, or model, for the design, development, and implementation of high quality, place relevant educational programming and build community connections to bolster sustainability.

Programs, such as Youth Entrepreneurship in Action ([www.yeadetroit.com](http://www.yeadetroit.com)), provide high school-aged youth opportunities to operate businesses and develop valuable workforce skills. The program places young people in businesses owned or operated by a sponsoring organization and trains them to manage business operations. What this and other programs do not do is develop the entrepreneurial mindset. Programs utilizing GenEI curricula, on the other hand, stimulate and engage students in "practical practicing". These programs most often call for a student to start a real business. The process of identifying a problem, creating a solution (product or service), building a business around it, and selling the product or service builds, for the youth, a unique experience of tying academic subject matter into a practical, experiential activity.

Figuring out how to reach young people is the first consideration. High school students may not be as mobile as adults, and are, therefore, unlikely to avail themselves of many of the resources available to them. Identifying what constitutes effective entrepreneurial education is the second consideration. A number of programs currently offered with an "entrepreneurship" title offer young people business training. These programs tend to focus on the functional areas of business, and although valuable, accounting, finance and marketing are not, in and of themselves, entrepreneurship.

## GENERATION E INSTITUTE

The Generation E Institute embraces the concept of reinventing Michigan's economy by expanding youth entrepreneurship education. What would our economy look like if our youth learned the skills to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, create a business plan, and operate a business venture before graduating from high school? We would have a state with more innovative thinkers, more entrepreneurs starting and growing businesses and more intrapreneurs innovating new products or providing ideas for improved products as Michigan employees. Youth can be taught the entrepreneurial skill sets that will allow them to have a global reach while living and thriving in Michigan. That mindset is taught and practiced throughout the Generation E curricula.

The curricula are project based and student driven. They support educational standards to provide rigor, relevance and relationship building into all lessons. From idea generation and market surveys, to developing business and financial plans, all students benefit from implementing their own business ventures. Math, English, writing, and communication skills are taught in the curricula to apply to core subjects. Whether the business venture is a one day event or continues for five years, the entrepreneurial mindset is established. From lawn mowing, product creation, community gardening, creating green and/or recycled products, youth are empowered and challenged to think creatively. As an entrepreneur or an intrapreneur, these skills equip youth to better compete and contribute in today's global economy. Teaching entrepreneurship education utilizing an experiential learning style at the middle school and high school levels provides a pipeline to entrepreneurship educational opportunities at post-secondary levels. Youth will pursue their chosen career pathway with an entrepreneurial spirit.

The goal of GenEI is to have every school district in Michigan offer entrepreneurship education by the year 2020. In its eighth year as a nonprofit organization, GenEI views itself as a catalyst for community innovation: empowering youth to be creative and innovative thinkers. GenEI has certified over 275 educators and community facilitators who have delivered youth entrepreneurship education to over 17,000 young people at schools, churches, and at a myriad of other organizations that offer entrepreneurship programs to young people.

However, recognizing that not every community offers or will offer entrepreneurship education in their school, GenEI utilizes a community-wide Five Step Approach to determine a community's interest and readiness to expand youth entrepreneurship education in a variety of settings.

The Generation E Institute is unique in its community approach and instruction designed to empower youth participants to grow business ventures. Students become equipped with skills to compete and contribute to our ever changing societal needs, and this approach is reflected in GenEI's mission statement:

*Through the development and delivery of innovative curricula and programs, GenEI creates the entrepreneurial mindset in individuals so they may compete in an ever-changing economy.*



## **Five Step Approach**

Knowing that job creation is essential to community sustainability and growth, GenEI has implemented a Five Step Approach process which will:

- increase awareness and generate excitement regarding the value of youth entrepreneurship education.
- build on the level of entrepreneurship programs currently offered in the communities.
- incorporate the input and expectations of all the organizations that serve youth in the region including in-school and after-school programs, home school families, faith-based and community-based organizations and organizations that serve at-risk, low-income and minority populations.
- utilize local champions and coaches to plan , operate, and evaluate the expanded program.
- certify educators and community-based organization representative to introduce and facilitate entrepreneurial activities into new or existing curricula or programs.
- build and coordinate a network of continued support from business and other community leaders.
- determine the role of partner organizations to serve as a lead organization, funders, facilitators/trainers, mentors, speakers, volunteers, or site hosts for the program.
- plan and hold a community-wide (regional) Showcase that recognizes and celebrates the effort of students, educators/facilitators, volunteers, and parents as part of running a successful youth entrepreneurship education program.

The Five Step Approach utilized by GenEI has consistently demonstrated itself to be a sustainable model.

Step One: Community Appraisal - Conduct community and youth surveys to identify entrepreneurial interest and generate excitement regarding the value of youth entrepreneurship education.

Step Two: Community Engagement - Incorporate the input and expectations of all the organizations with serve youth in the region at the community meeting.

Step Three: Community Planning - Utilize leaders and coaches to plan, operate and evaluate the community supported programs.

Step Four: Community Training - Certify educators/facilitators to implement curricula.

Step Five: Community Assistance/Sustainability - Build a coordinated network of continued support from business and other community leaders.

Each step invites community participation and direct involvement with the youth in the programs. As a result, relationships are formed, mentors are found, coaches are engaged, and a community embraces youth entrepreneurship education. The Generation E Institute invites southeast Michigan communities to reinvent themselves to be entrepreneurial in their thinking through a partnership with GenEI utilizing the Five Step Approach.

## SUCCESS STORIES

Success is defined and measured by the implementation of youth entrepreneurship programs and the community network of partners, businesses leaders, educators/facilitators that promote and deliver these programs. Numerical success can be measured by the amount of programs, number of youth involved, and the quantity of student run business ventures. Sustainability and the growth of the programs within the community is also a key indicator of success.

### **Evart, MI**

The director of Evart's Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) attended a presentation where Cheryl Peters was describing the Five Step Approach. One of LDFA's directives is to create and implement long-range economic development plans that create jobs and promote economic growth; she felt that this process would be of benefit to both their community and youth.

GenEI was asked to conduct a youth survey to identify community connections and entrepreneurial interest. Sample of the results were that students:

- liked their community.
- liked knowing their neighbors.
- made recommendations for what was missing in their community.
- did not plan on living in the community after graduation as they saw no opportunity for employment.

Once surveys were completed, community meetings were held and funding was secured to proceed with the Five Step Approach. Ultimately, 6 educators/facilitators were certified to utilize the high school curriculum and programs were implemented. Evart's Chamber of Commerce continuously mentored and built relationships with the students throughout the program. Michigan Works! in Big Rapids provided the students a connection to Ferris State University graduate assistants. They helped the students with their business plans and presentations. When ready, the students presented their plans to local business owners. In 2013, 7 students participated in the Student Business Showcase. One student business attracted much attention and assistance was offered by a manufacture and a consulting group to help this young man grow his business. Later, his teacher shared that this student's biggest victory was that he now had the opportunity to have a small business in his community. He realized he could ship anywhere while employing local people.

### **LEAP**

During the last 15 months, GenEI and the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) has been working together to create a culture of youth entrepreneurship throughout the Lansing region.

Receiving funding from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, LEAP contracted with GenEI to initiate the Five Step Approach. Local school districts were asked to participate in the youth survey and GenEI received results from 679 students within the 14 districts in the region. Community surveys were also given to community members to identify current programming and opportunities to connect with stakeholders for the overall development of the program.

GenEI certified 38 educators/facilitators that were outlined as a goal in the contract as well as 3 additional educators/facilitators utilizing monies from Lansing Community College. Over half of the educators/facilitators are certified in both the middle and high school curricula.

On April 30, 2014, the culmination of year one's work, LEAP invited students to a regional showcase held at the Lansing Center. Celebrate Youth Entrepreneurship event had 55 students and 50 supporters attend. Andre Hutson, former Michigan State University basketball player and local entrepreneur, gave the keynote address to the students about his background and triumphs. The event was a huge success with the students competing for \$9,000 in prize money. One student commented, "I thought it was a great experience that taught me about interacting with people and being confident in my ideas."

In 2014-2015, GenEI will be working with LEAP on Step Five of the approach to achieve sustainability for each of the 13 targeted communities.

There are many more communities that are using GenEI's Five Step Approach than just the two that have been highlighted. The most important factor in the success of the approach and the programs that are derived from the training is sustainability. GenEI works very closely with these and other communities to create that network of continued support.

## **YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS "CASE STUDIES"**

Entrepreneurship is a process of innovation that brings imagination, creativity, and real-world opportunity. Youth discover that they can pursue and engage in deliberate practice, intellectual engagement and meaningful action during the entrepreneurial process in order to achieve their desired goals. They have opportunities to experiment with and test their entrepreneurship abilities both in the classroom and within their community. GenEI teaches our youth to be accountable for their education and become change agents for the community through their knowledge and creative talent.

To celebrate the entrepreneurial mindset, Generation E Institute has held an annual celebration of young entrepreneurs for the last 9 years. The value of these events is reflected in the following:

**Emma**, took the Generation E program through Barry County Christian School. Her project "Gracie's Goodies", homemade, low fat beef flavored dog treats that she has made and marketed for the past several years. Emma said her mom helped her with financial planning for her GenEI project and with purchasing the ingredients for her dog treats business. "I learned a lot through GenEI about small business interests. It takes a lot of effort, and I learned how important it is to keep good records. That's helped me in lots of other situations." Emma has been successfully producing and packaging the dog treats for sale in 35 count bags at a \$4.50 price point.

**Curtis** and **Derek** participated in GenEI through the Delta/Schoolcraft/Escaaba ISD. They have developed a business model for easy Windows 8 tutorials that they then put on DVD disks and sell to individuals. "We target people who don't know very much at all about computers but want to learn the basics." They wrote 12 lessons for everything from Windows 8 navigation and start up screen to personalization. "We learned the importance of teamwork from GenEI" Derek said.

**Esther Stoneburner Tuttle**, 21, was home schooled and took GenEI through Portage Public schools. She came up with her own women's clothing design business, including selling actual clothing patterns, and has recently expanded into clothing photography. She sells her products through local art fairs and a sophisticated online internet website. "Doing the business plan through Generation E was incredibly helpful," she reflected. "GenEI prepared me to be responsible; to be a problem solver," she said.

**Dawson**, 14, has been home schooled and participates in GenEI through the Barry County 4-H program in nearby Hastings, Michigan. This is his second year in the GenEI program. He has completed his business and marketing plan for Dawson Design Studios where he markets and produces custom designs for silk screen printing and embroidery. He markets his studio services now over Facebook and Pinterest. "My parents have been very involved and supportive of me and my involvement in GenEI and the business. It's actually made us closer as a family," he commented.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Organization**

When communities use GenEI's Five Step Approach to create a culture of youth entrepreneurship, sustainable programs are cultivated to be part of the communities overall talent and new economic plans for the future. Determining which communities are in a position and interested in moving forward to expand youth entrepreneurship education is outlined below.

First, an organization needs to be identified to sponsor the program. Key characteristics that we look for are the organization's interests, influence, capacity, and community. There are many organizations that have interests in economic development, education, youth and family services. These and other interests often align with a desire to implement youth entrepreneurship programs.

It is also important to understand the degree and direction of the organization's influence. An organization with limited influence will have limited value in garnering community support or promoting specific programming. Few organizations have no influence, so it is important for us to understand the basis for the influence that they do carry. Is it with specific communities of interest or place? Is its influence based upon personalities, resources, or previous successes? The answers to these questions will allow us to better understand how the organization might best fit in the process of design, development and implementation of programs. A thoughtful analysis of regional news, organizations' media contributions and meetings with leaders and decision makers is the primary means for gathering initial answers.

We want to have an understanding of the organization's capacity. Do they have funds or the ability to raise them? Do they have employees or a deep base of volunteers? Organizations that have administrative infrastructure, or relevant technical expertise, can make significant contribution to successful program development.

Final consideration is given to the community served. Communities of place need to satisfy logistical requirements. Are meetings in the neighborhoods or with the sponsors logistically feasible? Are the other resources that would support the program available in or to the community that the sponsor serves? Communities of interest should align with the desired outcomes of a youth entrepreneurship program.

Corporations such as Quicken Loans and Microsoft in southeast Michigan are examples of organizations that illustrate the key ingredients for sponsoring youth entrepreneurship programs at some level. These organizations employ a significant number of people throughout southeast Michigan and have corporate profiles that suggest they value creative, innovative employees and have an interest in rebuilding the local economy. They may share an interest in creating a pool of skilled and talented employees for themselves, as well as a more vibrant, productive state economy.

Once an organization(s) has been identified, communities need to be approached to determine interest and readiness to expand youth entrepreneurship education using GenEI's Five Step Approach.

## **Community**

Knowing that each community is different, it is these variations that have the potential to impact program effectiveness. GenEI assumes that it must rely upon the organizations and residents of the communities for the introduction of youth entrepreneurship programs. It also assumes that the most effective programs would be designed collaboratively, achieving sustainability through the participation of multiple community stakeholders.

Simultaneously, we want to identify communities that would likely be good partners. Communities of place that are particularly attractive have churches, businesses, schools, and other organizations that communicate with one another in a way that is supportive of a common goal to improve the place. There is a cohesiveness of residents and organizations that, despite current conditions, pull together to solve community challenges. The place itself, the neighborhood, has an identity around which residents rally.

Another characteristic of community that we would consider is whether there is a focus on economic development. Places that have an interest in economic development seem to be more interested in youth entrepreneurship and they make the connections between current and future economic conditions through the development of their young people.

Similarly, communities that have targeted the development of young people are more inclined to want and participate in the development of entrepreneurship programs for them. GenEI's Community Approach has the benefit, to the community, of gathering valuable information about one of its key resources – youth. An example posted on the Coleman Foundation website described the following results of a Generation E youth survey:

- youth liked the community
- they had several good recommendations to improvements that could be made
- they liked that they knew people in the community

- they would like to live in the community, but planned to leave as they did not see opportunities for employment <sup>(16)</sup>

A final consideration of communities is the extent to which they demonstrate a commitment and willingness to seek funding for their initiative. This demonstration may be a paid staff person to manage the programs or mentor students. This positively impacts sustainability of the program and is likely to be more attractive to public and private funding sources. Those communities take ownership of the program with Generation E offering continuous support services as needed through community partnerships.

## **Partners**

Partner organizations are those with connections to the sponsor or community. We look for them to add capacity or expand community. Partner organizations could be influential churches, community development organizations, or schools. They may have access to funds or youth. These types of organizations are even more valuable if they actively seek opportunities for collaborating with others.

In addition to obvious alignment with youth programming and entrepreneurial education, potential partners, residing outside the community, may have an interest in engaging the community in some way. For instance, recent conversations with post-secondary institutions have uncovered their outreach challenges. Generation E can assist with this challenge by providing a platform for engaging university faculty and students in entrepreneurship programs for high school students in the neighborhoods. GenEI can do this while gaining the direct support of the parents, friends, and organizations within the students own community. Many such outreach programs fail to engage the community supports that might lead to successful program outcomes.

## **Vision**

Perhaps the most important aspect of the GenEI approach is creating a compelling story. To be successful, the story absolutely must engage some aspect of every partner's vision or objective. Sustainability is also important. We seek to help create programs that will continue to reap benefits for the communities and young people within them.

Sustainability is more than an outgrowth of continued funding. Sustainability also speaks to the refinement of the programs and their ability to deliver positive outcomes over time. Such as:

- What is the economic impact on the community that supports a youth entrepreneurship program?
- How much does a graduate earn over his lifetime versus someone who does not participate in entrepreneurial training?
- Does the graduate go on to college at higher rates than someone who does not participate?
- What type of employment does the graduate take as a 20 year old? As a 35-year-old? Is this significantly different than employment engaged in by someone who does not participate in youth entrepreneurship programs?

Other questions might relate to outcomes that are more unique. An example would be for a program that partners with a college with one or more high schools to support college outreach in addition to promotion of entrepreneurial education through articulation and dual enrollment. The college might want to know what percentage of entrepreneurship program graduates go on to enroll at the college. As well, the college may seek to understand and measure the impact on any of its students that participate as coaches or facilitators for the youth entrepreneurship program.

Tracking this and other data will allow us to see what types of programs work. It will give communities an idea of the design of programs that are most effective for their circumstances and resources. This data might also be part of the feedback loop that allows Generation E to continue refinement of the curricula so that it continues to be relevant and impactful.

### **Cost**

Program development costs can be high. Charitable donations, grants, and even volunteer hours, appear to be difficult to come by. A focus on cost reduction and scalability can form an effective counterbalance to limited time and money available to educational programs.

In conclusion, identifying the sponsor organization(s) and community(s) are not serial processes. We start with listening to influencers, attending community meetings, and collecting information through various means in order to develop leads. Depending on whether the prospective sponsor or community is identified first, the next step is to identify other key stakeholders. The next step is to have community meetings with the goal of identifying partners and establishing a framework for designing, developing and implementing the youth entrepreneurship programs using the Five Step Approach.

## **RESULTS**

### **Lead Organizations/Communities**

Adhering to our research methodology, lead organizations and communities were identified from various influencers, community meetings and various means in southeast Michigan. These organizations and communities that have interests that aligns with a desire to implement youth entrepreneurship programs and have the effect of enriching the program experience and expanding their reach.

**Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)** – ACCESS is a well-established organization with over 100 programs implemented through eight locations around Detroit. They were founded to support Arab immigrants and have expanded to provide valuable services to various immigrants and marginalized residents of many neighborhoods. This organization’s track record, capacity, and focus on youth and entrepreneurial development make it a key partner for GenEI. This organization also has good relationships with several funders which increases the likelihood of its programs being funded.

**TechTown Detroit (TechTown)** – TechTown is the largest incubator targeting neighborhoods. The organization has an established business development program based on establishing an integrative presence in targeted neighborhoods. The organization gains greater insights and

establishes deeper relationships as a result of its consultants working from the targeted neighborhoods. TechTown, like ACCESS, has good relationships with many of the region's largest foundations and other sources of funding. Forming partnerships for the development and delivery of youth entrepreneurship programs gives GenEI the benefits of greater opportunities for funding, more efficient access to community relationships, and name recognition and credibility.

**Michigan Women's Foundation (MWF)** – MWF and its Executive Director are well-respected and connected within its chosen niche of providing programs and support designed to empower women. Like ACCESS and TechTown, MWF is connected throughout the foundation community. This organization is a key player due to its prominence among those supporting women and the director's enthusiasm for the GenEI curricula and approach.

**Michigan Economic Development Corp (MEDC)** – As the state's most prominent economic development agency and grantor for a large proposal utilizing GenEI, MEDC is an influential organization for GenEI. Prospective program partners see MEDC's past support of GenEI-based proposals as positive.

**New Economy Initiative (NEI)** – NEI is a program that brings together ten philanthropic funders to accelerate the transition of metro Detroit.

**University of Michigan – Dearborn** – At least two colleges or departments on the campus engage high school students in competitions (e.g. robotics) or projects (e.g. community action/development). UMD is a significant academic influencer in southeast Michigan. Strong industry ties and a commitment to community outreach and engagement make UMD a valuable partner in GenEI's efforts to establish a pipeline of entrepreneurially-minded young people.

**Church of the Messiah** – This is not a large church but an influential one based on what it has accomplished without huge capital resources. Church of the Messiah has the first MIT-supported makerspace established in a church. On premises there is also a woodworking space, bicycle repair shop, computer workshop, and community garden. In the last five years the congregation has grown almost ten-fold. Sixty percent of the roughly 400 members are Black males under the age of thirty. The commitment of the church to young people and the willingness to begin work with whatever resources it has available make it an easy partner to work with. Its influence in the city attracts positive support to its initiatives as well as potential partners.

**Comerica Bank** – Comerica Bank has made grant funds available to Generation E in Battle Creek, MI and has shown appreciation for the quality of the curricula and approach. The Community Reinvestment Act's leadership is looking for new initiatives to support in Detroit neighborhoods. Comerica can bring funding, credibility, and positive press to GenEI-based youth programs in Detroit.

### **Committed Communities**

From these examples of prospective partners in southeast Michigan, GenEI has spoken with ACCESS, TechTown Detroit, Michigan Women's Foundation, and the Church of the Messiah.



## **ACCESS / Michigan Women's Foundation / TechTown Detroit**

GenEI over a series of several meetings gained ACCESS' commitment to serve as the lead partner in a collaborative proposal with these three organizations to offer entrepreneurial development programs to Detroit youth.

Loosely following the LEAP model, GenEI structured the relationships, programs, and the proposal around delivering programs in five Detroit neighborhoods selected by the partners. Each partner looked at their goals and assets to determine which neighborhoods they wanted programs implemented in. The partners were convened by GenEI with the intention to create a proposal that addressed several neighborhoods using a variety of models. GenEI sought to have in-class and after-school programs represented. As well, the varied interests of the partners would be represented in the programs.

- ACCESS' programs targeted predominantly immigrant neighborhoods outside of the classroom.
- Michigan Women's Foundation's focus is on the development of young women. Its contribution to the proposal was integrating entrepreneurship into existing leadership programming offered to a local all-girls high school.
- TechTown's SWOT City program supports the economic development of neighborhoods by providing technical assistance and consultation to businesses in those neighborhoods. Its contribution to the proposal arose from its desire to deepen and strengthen ties to the neighborhood.

GenEI's Community Approach and the subsequent youth program engage more members of the neighborhood around a common desire to provide meaningful development opportunities for the youth. Each of these partners use the GenEI platform to support and enhance its mission and goals with programs tailored to the target audiences and neighborhoods. Collectively, they contribute, in a new way, to the development of entrepreneurial thinking in young people and the entrepreneurial pipeline for the region.

## **Church of the Messiah**

This is a success story not because a program has been developed or proposal written. It is a success story because a clear need and alignment of interests have been identified and a working relationship established. Initial contact was made with the church due to the high percentage of young Black men that it serves on the east side of Detroit. In a short period of time church leadership revealed programs that it saw as great conduits for delivery of entrepreneurial thinking using GenEI curricula that not only enhances the lives of the young people but strengthens the churches programs.

Two features of GenEI's offerings that are of particular interest to Church of the Messiah are (1) the capacity for customizing their entrepreneurship programs based on the flexibility of the curricula, and (2) the model which gives the church ownership of the program and its delivery.

Numerous other opportunities exist for GenEI to add value to development programs for youth in Detroit. Examples include Keep Growing Detroit's Youth Growing Detroit that "brings together gardens that work with youth ages 11-18 to participate in a series of training, networking and marketing opportunities focused on teaching youth about agriculture, the environment, and our food system"<sup>(18)</sup> and Kidpreneur which offers entrepreneurship classes in lean startup, design, making money, presentation skills, demo day, and requirements.<sup>(19)</sup>

Some of the organizations offering these programs welcome the opportunity to use an established, vetted entrepreneurship curriculum. Small or underfunded programs do not have the resources to develop curricula from scratch. An established curriculum brings the benefits of cost savings and, equally important, a more fundable program due to foundations' trust in GenEI curricula and approach.

## ANALYSIS

A wide variety of religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic interests are represented in Detroit. Other factors that can be considered communities of interest include labor, politics and place (neighborhood, Midtown, downtown, etc.).

The program's common goal is to enrich the educational experiences of Detroit youth while contributing to a vibrant regional economy by filling its entrepreneurial pipeline with diverse talent. Innovation and economic growth depend on being able to produce future leaders with the skills and attitudes to be entrepreneurial in their professional lives, whether by creating their own companies or innovating in larger organizations.<sup>17)</sup>

As we look to expand programming in southeast Michigan, relationships that connect high schools and colleges will be of high value. They address the region's poor high school graduation rates by engaging the very institutions that suffer as a result of declining graduation of local high school students.

The process of developing an entrepreneurial mindset among young people with programs developed within and supported by community members and organizations has the effect of building stronger community relationships. GenEI's community approach facilitates the development of these community integrated programs and thus contributes to community economic development activity in a unique way that appeals to communities and organizations seeking to support development activities within them.

In a very short period of time, GenEI has learned that it is extremely important for programs to be developed to the unique needs and resources of the communities they are offered in. Also, important to the effectiveness of these programs is the need for the content to be delivered by facilitators rooted in the community.

Many large cities in the United States share similar challenges with Detroit. It is plausible, therefore, that the findings and conclusions here would be applicable to them as well.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From this research, GenEI has gathered the data that will be used to replicate and serve any community and economic development organization. The data gave GenEI the information needed to focus on southeast Michigan. Several recommendations have been provided:

1. Establish deep relationships with foundations and other organizations that have an interest in establishing an entrepreneurial culture in southeast Michigan.
  - a. Costs to develop and implement a youth entrepreneurship program with GenEI, though not exceptionally high, are problematic for many of the organizations that GenEI works with. Establishing and nurturing relationships with foundations, corporations, and other organizations interested in youth development creates the opportunity for the funding community to share and request information about programs, get to know individual developers and partners, and, over time, establish a level of trust that might result in greater access to funds for the organizations seeking to execute the programs.
  - b. Equally important in establishing these relationships is the opportunity for GenEI and partners to learn what the funders look for in fundable projects and establish an ongoing dialogue that results in measureable improvements in the communities served by the programs.
2. Create a committee or board of institutions, organizations, and individuals with an interest in collaboratively developing strategies for promoting entrepreneurial mindsets among Detroit's youth.
  - a. Entrepreneurship is a popular focus of community and economic development organizations. Many workshops, programs and initiatives are being implemented with varying levels of quality to different audiences with wide-ranging expectations. A regional board or committee organized to share information, create strategic connections, and coordinate activities around some regional outcomes could generate the benefits of improvements in program quality, more efficient funding, reduced duplication of effort, and a more vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.
  - b. Support research and collection and dissemination of relevant data around the economic and social impacts of entrepreneurial development of urban youth.
3. Gather support for and plan a Detroit Youth Entrepreneur Showcase.
  - a. This recommendation serves primarily to support the promotion of the entrepreneurial mindset as a contribution to the lives of young people, the communities, and the economy. Students who participate in the showcase extend the learning experience that they participate in through their neighborhood programs. They get to see themselves in a larger, perhaps different, community than they were previously aware of. Participating organizations have the opportunity to see the outcomes of their participation on a larger scale and financial supporters can see the outcomes that their funding contributed to. All of this serves to grow and nurture the larger community and the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

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## APPENDICES

### DETROIT CONTACTS MADE

PROSPECTIVE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	CONTACT NAMES	POINT(S) OF CONNECTION	REFERRED / REFERRING ORGANIZATION
Detroit Community School	Bart Eddy	Brightmoor Neighborhood – TechTown SWOT City	
Brightmoor Alliance	Kirk Mayes / Jeff Adams	Brightmoor Neighborhood – Influencer	
TechTown Detroit	Leslie Smith	Detroit Influencer Connection to Funding	
Osborn Neighborhood Alliance	Quincy Jones / Wayne Ramocan	Osborn Neighborhood – Influencer Partner with TechTown	
ACCESS Community Services	Sonia Harb / Michael Ansara / Anisa / Wisam Fakhoury	Detroit Influencer Connection to Funding	
Detroit Edison Public School Academy	Ralph Bland	Innovative School	From Friend
StartUp High School	Peter Su / Jerry Xu	Innovative School Program	
Kidpreneur	Thanh Tran	Innovative School Program	
Startup Effect	Brian Bosche	Innovative School Program	Contacted Gen E
UofM	Larry Molnar	Higher Education - Influencer	From Gen E
UofM Dearborn	Tim Davis / Erica Adams / Tony England / Jeanne Girard	Higher Education - Influencer	
Matrix Human Services	Sandra Ramocan	Detroit Influencer	
Comerica Bank		Grant Maker	From Gen E

PROSPECTIVE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	CONTACT NAMES	POINT(S) OF CONNECTION	REFERRED / REFERRING ORGANIZATION
Girl Scouts of SE Michigan	Denise Dalrymple / Ruth Zamierowski	Detroit Non-Profit	From Friend
Steppingstone School for Gifted Education	Kiyo Morse	Detroit School	From Friend
Detroit Future City	Kenneth Cockrel	Detroit Influencer	
Denby High School		Detroit High School	From Detroit Future City From LEAP Stakeholders
Detroit Public Schools	Jack Martin	Detroit Schools	From Detroit Future City
MEDC	Amy Cell / Paula Sorrell	Economic Development Organization	
Michigan Corps	Elizabeth Garlow		
CJJR Foundation	Arica Johnson	Foundation	From Friend
Cass Tech High School	Richard James	Detroit High School	From Startup Effect From Michigan Corps
Focus: HOPE	William Jones / Judith Williams	Detroit Influencer Community Organization Education	From UofM Dearborn, C2BE
Warren Conner Development Coalition	Orlando Bailey / Maggie DeSantis	Community Organization East Side Influencer	
Genesis Hope	Jeannine Hatcher	Community Organization	From WCDC
Cristo Rey Schools		Detroit High School	Contacted Gen E
SBA			
Madonna University	Phillip Olla		Contacted Gen E
The Community House	Camille Jayne / Rosie Kouleberis		
Burton International Middle School		Detroit Middle School	From Startup Effect
Church of the Messiah	Barry Randolph	East Side Influencer	
Center for Community Based Enterprise	Michael Friedman / Deb Olsen		

PROSPECTIVE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	CONTACT NAMES	POINT(S) OF CONNECTION	REFERRED / REFERRING ORGANIZATION
New Economy Initiative	Don Jones	Grant Maker	
Edsel Ford High School		Dearborn High School	From ACCESS
Fordson High School		Dearborn High School	From ACCESS
MI Women's Foundation	Carolyn Cassin / Danielle Hillker	Detroit Influencer	
Excellent Schools Detroit	Dan Varner	Academic Influencer	From Detroit Future City
Jalen Rose Academy	Tanya Bowman		From Startup Effect, UofM Dearborn
Community Economic Development Club	Truman Hudson	Community Economic Development Club Cody HS / Cass Tech HS / Detroit School of the Arts	
Automation Alley	Alysia Greene	Detroit Influencer	
Detroit Leadership Academy	Shawn Hill		Contacted Gen E