



## **SBTA Q+A**

*Who is eligible for participation in the program?*

The SBTA is open to all small businesses in Berkshire County with fewer than 20 employees. It can be a sole proprietorship, an existing business with employees, or just an idea that needs help getting off the ground.

Special consideration is given to those with demonstrable financial need, as well as to community members of color, people with disabilities, immigrants, women, and LGBTQIA+ community members. Preference is also given to individuals and businesses that are ready to launch their new business or initiative.

*What is the goal of the program?*

The primary program goal is to equip active owners with foundational business operations knowledge, as well as practical guidance on business development issues, tasks, and initiatives that allow them to launch, pivot, or expand their business; the primary outcome is business growth and the creation of jobs. The success of these efforts will help decrease the wealth gap in southern Berkshire County.

*What does the program provide?*

CDCSB's SBTA Program helps new businesses launch, existing businesses pivot, and established businesses extend their productive lives. Our goal is to provide businesses and startups with professional business development guidance and planning that will help them sustain, pivot, and/or grow their business and create jobs. The program empowers business owners with the knowledge and tools to be successful and grow in a sustainable way.

We provide specific professional guidance on accounting, financial management, marketing, advertising, website development, e-commerce, general business planning, succession planning, and applications for financing.

*How does the program work?*

Key to the success of the CDCSB's SBTA Program is meaningful engagement with each applicant. Our outreach is grounded in active listening. We conduct in-depth individual conversations with each participant specifically identify and define their challenges and goals in detail, so that we can connect them with appropriate and effective subject matter experts.

CDCSB engages a range of professional consultants to respond to evolving requests, which allows consultations to be customized to each business. This flexible model means we can adapt nimbly to the needs of the businesses that we serve.

*What are the criteria for participation in the program?*

We offer a limited number of opportunities for participation and must select participants who are able to commit to the rigor of the program and the following criteria:

- The participant will commit to and partake fully in their agreed-on, individualized program.
- The participant understands that a full partnership between the participant and the CDCSB's training consultant is required for program success.
- The participant understands that the consultant is not a substitute for staffing.
- The participant agrees to co-create the work and leave with new skills in their toolbox.
- The participant will complete assessments provided after completing the program and individual technical assistance hours.
- The participant understands that registering for this program is an agreement to completing it. Missing a session without prior notice may result in the inability to receive future grant funds from the CDCSB. Missing multiple sessions may require, at the discretion of the program director, removal from the program or deferral to a later session sequence.

If this program is not right for you and your business at this time, CDCSB will refer you to other resources and opportunities.

*How do you determine the type and level of support for a business?*

We have individual conversations with each participant to precisely identify and define their challenges and goals, determine if/how we can serve those goals, then connect them with appropriate and effective subject matter experts. It may take a few conversations to determine if and how we are able to assist your business.

Sometimes, we find that a potential program participant's needs fall outside of our program parameters and we provide recommendations for how to move forward with other programs and service providers.

*Is everyone who asks for help given help?*

While we wish we could help everyone, this program is designed to provide business owners with guidance and planning that gives them a foundation from which to work toward their business goals. As of this time, we do not provide support for work that should be part of a business's function. Due to the limited availability of funding, acceptance into the program is competitive.

*What kind of consulting is offered?*

CDCSB engages a range of professional consultants to respond to evolving requests, which allows consultations to be customized to each business. This flexible model means we can adapt nimbly to the needs of the businesses that we serve. We typically offer assistance in the following categories:

- Business Plans
- Sales Strategy
- Marketing and Advertising
- Financial Planning
- Technology Support
- Bookkeeping
- Risk Management
- Staffing & Benefits

*I was rejected from the program and I don't understand why.*

This program is dedicated to helping a business or startup's owner develop the foundational elements and best practices they need to be successful. We do not provide staffing or services for standard business functions. For example, we don't provide a bookkeeper or social media management but we will help you set up your books or help you create a plan for social media based on your goals. We designed the program so that we may have both a deeper impact on those we serve while effecting as broad an impact in the community as possible.