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## **Rogers Park Business Alliance expands roster of no-cost small business assistance programs in 2022**

**GROW entrepreneurial training program moves to no-cost model, open to all Chicago and regional applicants with classes beginning April 6**

**400+ small businesses assisted by RPBA programs in 2021, including the Illinois Small Business Development Center at RPBA**

CHICAGO (March 15, 2022)—The nonprofit **Rogers Park Business Alliance (RPBA)** is expanding its roster of no-cost small business assistance programs, with its **GROW** entrepreneurial training program transitioning from a low-cost to no-cost model starting with a 10-week virtual program from April 6 to June 8, 2022. The only comprehensive small business training program of its kind on the north side of Chicago, GROW is open to all small businesses and independent entrepreneurs from across Chicagoland. Registration is now open through April 4 at [www.grow-progresando.org](http://www.grow-progresando.org).

GROW is part of a series of business assistance programs offered by RPBA, which also includes the **Illinois Small Business Development Center (IL SBDC)** at Rogers Park Business Alliance and its **Business Accessibility Toolkit (BAT)** small business assistance program. These programs provide critical resources, training and one-on-one consultations from subject matter experts, all at no cost to participating businesses. Learn more about participating in IL SBDC at RPBA and BAT programs at [RPBA.org](http://RPBA.org).

In 2021, RPBA's roster of business assistance programs helped secure a total of approximately \$3 million in grants received by small businesses; advised 400+ small businesses in historically underserved, diverse and multilingual communities on Chicago's north side; and provided 20,000 hours of free staff assistance. Of the 95 participants who completed GROW training since the program's inception in 2013, 40 have opened a brick and mortar location, and 20 are operating business virtually and/or from home.

### **Small business testimonials**

Past IL SBDC at RPBA participant **Badou Diakhate** from Badou Senegalese Cuisine shared, "Any time I have to make a major business decision, I consult with RPBA. For example, when I was moving to a new location, RPBA provided me with a grant to complete my renovation. They even assisted me to apply at the last minute for the Together Now Fund, which I was successfully granted a month later from the City of Chicago. I am grateful and humbled that we have such a resourceful organization in Rogers Park."

Past BAT program participant **Reyna Gonzalez** from Dulceria La Fiesta said, “I appreciate all the assistance from the BAT program and this rebranding is big for me. It is done just like how I always wanted—colorful. I love the whole concept. Thank you, thank you, thank you RPBA!” Dulceria La Fiesta received help via BAT for the design and installation of the business’ new storefront and interior improvement in 2021-22.

Past GROW participant **Autumn Williams** from Urban Tables said, “As a direct result of the resources provided by the RPBA staff, Urban Tables is now incorporated and licensed. Through the GROW program we have developed a network of business relationships that continue to strengthen and grow.” Urban Tables was incorporated and licensed in 2014 as a result of the GROW training program and received financial assistance for a storefront façade improvement in 2018. It was also able to expand customer base by selling products at RPBA’s Glenwood Sunday Market since 2016 and becoming a food supplier for essential workers through RPBA’s network in 2020.

#### **About the GROW entrepreneurial training program**

Rogers Park Business Alliance launched its GROW entrepreneurial training program in 2013. Its curriculum is highly interactive and includes basic business knowledge, specialty subject education, and technical and specialty assistance consultations. GROW is led by RPBA’s staff who, along with leading business, education, marketing and legal experts, deliver a comprehensive program with the goal of each participant developing a personalized, comprehensive and implementable business plan. For more information, visit [www.grow-progresando.org](http://www.grow-progresando.org).

#### **About the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Rogers Park Business Alliance**

Through the support of the U. S. Small Business Administration and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois SBDC at Rogers Park Business Alliance opened for business in January 2020. It is part of a nationwide network of centers that promote entrepreneurship, small business growth and the U.S. economy through no-cost, confidential advising for established small businesses and entrepreneurs.

#### **About Rogers Park Business Alliance**

**Rogers Park Business Alliance** (RPBA) is a nonprofit organization that has served Chicago’s diverse Rogers Park neighborhood for 28 years. RPBA works to cultivate and sustain a thriving economic environment in Rogers Park, serving businesses and residents with a variety of public events and business initiatives. RPBA programs include the GROW entrepreneurial training program, the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Rogers Park Business Alliance, annual Best of Rogers Park awards, Chalk Howard Street and Taste of Clark Street festivals, and the Glenwood Sunday Market farmers market. For more information, visit [RPBA.org](http://RPBA.org).

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