



For Immediate Release

[Images available for download here >>](#)

Rogers Park Business Alliance establishes new State of Illinois Economic Empowerment Center and expands no-cost bilingual small business assistance program GROW/PROGRESANDO

GROW/PROGRESANDO, now encompassing all small business assistance provided by the nonprofit, expands its services for historically marginalized communities as its Spanish division of entrepreneurial training PROGRESANDO celebrates the fifth anniversary

CHICAGO (January 22, 2025)—The nonprofit **Rogers Park Business Alliance** (RPBA) proudly announces a new **State of Illinois Economic Empowerment Center** among other expansions of its no-cost bilingual small business assistance program, **GROW/PROGRESANDO**. The expansion comes at the **fifth anniversary of the Spanish entrepreneurial training cohort PROGRESANDO**, as RPBA offers all small business assistance in both English and Spanish. The only comprehensive small business training program of its kind on the north side of Chicago, GROW/PROGRESANDO is open to all small businesses and independent entrepreneurs from across Chicagoland and nationwide.

GROW/PROGRESANDO, formerly the name of RPBA's biannual entrepreneurial training cohorts, now encompasses the entire scope of entrepreneurial assistance provided at RPBA, equipping both early and advanced entrepreneurs with entrepreneurial knowledge, expert technical assistance, resource referral, and specialty support. Services provided include business assistance via a **new State of Illinois Economic Empowerment Center** with an emphasis on historically marginalized communities, **biannual entrepreneurial training cohorts every Spring and Fall with an expanded curriculum, new webinars and workshops** based on suggestions from business owners, **Business Accessibility Toolkit** (BAT) small

business assistance program, and an **RPBA Help Desk**. For more information on the small business assistance provided by RPBA and to sign up, visit businesssupport.rpba.org.

RPBA establishes a new entrepreneurial training program, **GROW-MORE/PROGRESANDO-MÁS Economic Empowerment Center at RPBA**, as part of the [Illinois Economic Empowerment Centers Program](#). The new Economic Empowerment Center, launching later this month, will provide no-cost business assistance to historically marginalized communities including minorities, women, individuals with a disability, dislocated workers, veterans, and youth entrepreneurs. Services include business advice, technical assistance, education, and cohort training, including resources and training tailored toward start-ups, existing businesses, and dislocated workers. **The first event will kick off via a small business loan workshop** led by Huntington Bank on Wednesday, January 29, in Spanish at 10 a.m. and in English at 11 a.m., at the GROW/PROGRESANDO entrepreneurial training center (7056 N. Clark St.). **RPBA is the only site on Chicago's north side among the four Economic Empowerment Centers in the city.**

For early entrepreneurs, GROW/PROGRESANDO offers an **expanded curriculum for its existing biannual entrepreneurial training cohorts**, taking place virtually in both English and Spanish to serve a diverse community locally and beyond. The next **Spanish** session PROGRESANDO will run from February 3 to March 24, on Mondays from 6 - 8 p.m. New training this year includes a legal panel with lawyers in intellectual property, corporation operations, estate planning, real estate, taxes, and funding resources. These new courses add to existing training that covers business plan development, marketing, operations, licensing and permits, and loan opportunities. The deadline to register for PROGRESANDO is January 31. The next **English** session GROW runs 8 weeks from February 6 to March 27, on Thursdays from 6 – 8 p.m. New training this year includes retirement planning, personal finance, investment opportunities, financial advising, and expanded coaching on funding resources for business owners. The registration for GROW is full with a deadline to register for the waitlist being January 31.

In addition to offering the above multi-week courses, GROW/PROGRESANDO is expanding its **standalone info sessions** based on suggestions from business owners, including workshops and webinars on neurodiversity in the workplace, networking, technology, and business funding.

Past GROW participant **Emma Rubin** who is aspiring to become a business owner, shares: “The GROW program helped me move from an idea to a concrete understanding of what is needed in order to launch my business. Program facilitators were both encouraging and realistic about the challenges involved, and it was great to connect with other participants and learn from their experiences. Whether you need some structure, camaraderie, or information to make progress on your small business, I encourage everyone to sign up!”

Another past participant **Ana Coronel**, owner of Identity Salon by Ana, shares: “I wanted to open my business but did not know how to start. Via PROGRESANDO, I gained everything that I needed, from a business plan, a budget, marketing strategies, the right location, and business licenses, to an accountant, a business banking account, a website, and much more. RPBA is always looking for ways to help entrepreneurs, and having learned about PROGRESANDO before opening my beauty salon made all the difference. Thank you, PROGRESANDO!/Quería abrir mi negocio, pero no sabía por dónde empezar. A través de PROGRESANDO, obtuve todo lo que necesitaba: un plan de negocio, un presupuesto, estrategias de marketing, la ubicación adecuada, licencias comerciales, un contador, una cuenta bancaria para mi negocio, un sitio web y mucho más. RPBA siempre está buscando maneras de apoyar a

las personas emprendedoras, y haber conocido PROGRESANDO antes de abrir mi salón de belleza marcó toda la diferencia. ¡Gracias, PROGRESANDO!”

Sandi Price, Executive Director of RPBA, looks back on the trajectory of GROW/PROGRESANDO and shares the vision for the program: “At RPBA, we believe that small businesses are the backbone of our community and economy. In Rogers Park, more than seventy percent of the businesses are small start-ups, and this is a diverse neighborhood that closely resembles the racial makeup of the City of Chicago. We are constantly updating and expanding the program to reach more people in need, whether that is PROGRESANDO empowering Latine entrepreneurs by overcoming language barriers, or the Economic Empowerment Centers benefitting underserved business owners. Many past participants now run successful businesses; some became RPBA board members guiding our work to help more entrepreneurs. We look forward to continuing to work with our constituents to make sure our entrepreneurial training programs fill the needs of the community.”

The history of small business assistance programs provided at RPBA

Rogers Park Business Alliance operates 12 programs in the realms of Business Development, training, retention, attraction, technical assistance, and capital access. The English-language GROW entrepreneurial training program was launched in 2013, and the same year, a Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) Innovation Center was established. In 2016, a Small Business Opportunity Center was created to provide expert advice on small business loans. In 2017, an RPBA Help Desk was offered to help entrepreneurs schedule pro bono consultations with professional experts. In 2019, RPBA launched its Spanish-language version of GROW—PROGRESANDO—to better serve the diverse Rogers Park neighborhood where nearly a quarter of residents identify as Latine. The same year, GROW/PROGRESANDO partnered with The Fund for Equitable Business Growth to offer technical support to entrepreneurs of color. In 2020, RPBA opened a 1,970-square-foot storefront location for GROW/PROGRESANDO at 7056 N. Clark Street, added Cultural & Capital Specialists from BACP, and established an Illinois Small Business Development Center. In 2021, the Business Accessibility Toolkit was established to help modernize small businesses owned by historically underserved people who speak languages other than English. In 2022, GROW/PROGRESANDO became a free training program for all. In 2023, the GROW/PROGRESANDO training curriculum was adopted by Mass Hire, the Department of Career Services for the State of Massachusetts. Between 2013-2023, more than 150 participants graduated from the training program, and RPBA served over 1,000 businesses via its small business assistance.

About Rogers Park Business Alliance

Rogers Park Business Alliance is a nonprofit organization that has served Chicago’s diverse Rogers Park neighborhood for more than 30 years, providing services in both English and Spanish to a broad community. 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/PROGRESANDO entrepreneurial training program, the Illinois Small Business Development Center at RPBA, annual Best of Rogers Park awards, Chalk Howard Street Festival, Taco Crawl, and the Glenwood Sunday Market farmers market. For more information, visit [RPBA.org](https://rpba.org).

###

Photos l-r:

GROW/PROGRESANDO training sessions; participant Michelle Moore vending her products at Glenwood Sunday Market. Photos courtesy of Rogers Park Business Alliance.

Press Contacts:

Louise Yingduo Liu | The Silverman Group, Inc.

312-961-9290 (cell) | louise@silvermangroupchicago.com