

Cecil County Public Library's Business Information Center



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THE CECIL COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY (CCPL) Business Information Center (BIC) offers free, one-on-one assistance to local entrepreneurs. Whether clients enter the library as existing or aspiring business or non-profit owners, the online resources and individualized meetings available through the BIC are designed to address their needs.

While the library is open on a limited basis in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Business Librarians Laura Metzler and Ellie Jones have continued to offer remote services since March, closely assisting more than 50 individual clients via Zoom and hosting a series of virtual business programs. Metzler and Jones, who have amassed an email subscription list of nearly 900 local entrepreneurs, developed a twice-weekly e-newsletter, *Three Things: Keeping You in the Know During COVID-19*. The newsletter updates business owners on rapidly changing statewide health regulations, funding opportunities, and more. The Business Librarians have continued to expand their virtual reach, creating a BIC Facebook group and Instagram page in

early September. The social media avenues share entrepreneurial resources, such as *Weekly Book Picks*, an ongoing segment featuring book recommendations from CCPL's Business Collection.

Though its services are broad, most clients initially enter the BIC in search of county and state regulations for setting up a business or non-profit. Gigi Ewusi, a mother and aspiring business owner, came to the BIC in early 2019 with the dream of opening her own yoga studio. Gigi opened the doors to her studio in January 2020, sharing, "The BIC worked with me every step of the way, from getting my business registered, to obtaining the necessary licensure. I couldn't have come this far without them." In the months that followed, Gigi then worked with the Business Librarians to transition her business model online, offering virtual classes and services.

Business planning assistance is another one of the top services requested by clients of the BIC. The Business Librarians utilize the library's online GALE Business Plan Builder and GALE Business Resource Center to help clients find sample business plans and write their own. They also offer personalized business plan revisions, providing clients with feedback based on their goals. According to Micah Mincey, owner of Games On Demand, a local mobile gaming company, "My meeting in the BIC was filled with so many business planning ideas. Everything I learned was beneficial."

The scope of free services available to entrepreneurs in Cecil County doesn't stop at the BIC. Cecil County Public Library is an active member of Cecil Business Resource Partners (CBRP), a network of organizations dedicated to serving the county's business and non-profit community. Representatives from Cecil County Office of Economic Development, Susquehanna Workforce Network, and Cecil College, have continued to meet regularly, on a virtual basis, to address the ever-changing needs of local business owners amidst the pandemic. The Library also partners frequently with the Cecil County Chamber of Commerce and regional SCORE.

The Cecil County Public Library recognizes the hurdles often faced by entrepreneurs and seeks to meet the needs of the business and non-profit community through the assistance provided in the Business Information Center. This year has posed unprecedented challenges for the community, but the Library has remained dedicated to guiding the families, businesses, and organizations that keep Cecil County thriving. ■