

News Release

For Immediate Release

Empowerment Squared launches Southwestern Ontario Black Entrepreneurship Network with events in Hamilton (December 5, 2022) and Windsor (December 6, 2022)

December 5, 2022 – Hamilton, ON and Windsor, ON | Empowerment Squared

On August 19, 2022, the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario ([FedDev Ontario](#)), [announced a non-repayable investment of over \\$1.9 million](#) for [Empowerment Squared](#) to launch a Black entrepreneurship network, funded through the federal [Black Entrepreneurship Program \(BEP\)](#)—a \$265-million investment to support the long-term success of Black entrepreneurs and business owners.

Through this funding, Empowerment Squared and partners are formally launching the Southwestern Ontario Black Entrepreneurship Network in Hamilton on December 5, 2022 (at Hamilton Public Library, Main Branch, 5:00 p.m.) and in Windsor on December 6, 2022 (at Art Windsor-Essex, 5:00 p.m.). Members of the public are invited to attend - RSVP required at [swoben.ca](#).

The Southwestern Ontario Black Entrepreneurship Network (SWOBEN) will offer a number of resources to support Black entrepreneurs as a vital contributor to Canada's economy and our nation's rich culture. All resources will be offered to qualified program participants free of charge. These resources will be offered in Hamilton, Windsor and online, and include:

Business Advisory Services: Network members will be able to access hands-on individualized business advisory services from experts to help with the development of their business plans, accessing capital, optimizing operations, marketing activities, human resources and more. Members will access professional advisors after reviewing their needs with Network coordinators.

Mentorship: SWOBEN will offer a managed mentorship program to connect aspiring and emerging entrepreneurs with experienced mentors to offer guidance and support.

Networking: Empowerment Squared, partners and SWOBEN are committed to building a community of support around entrepreneurship. Networking events will be held in Hamilton, in Windsor, and online.

Seminars and Workshops: The Network will offer individual seminars, both in person and online, on topics such as bookkeeping and financial skills, marketing, digital literacy, addressing racism in business and more.

Online Classes: In partnership with educational provider Biz Skills for Good, SWOBEN will offer a customized and diverse set of online classes developed specifically to support Black entrepreneurs with a focus on social value and creating positive impact.

Black Business Development Program: A flagship program of SWOBEN, the Black Business Development Program offers Black entrepreneurs a hybrid wraparound four-month experience, which includes business skills training, personalized assessments of existing business activities and concepts, matching with professional services, mentorship, and opportunities for businesses to be profiled.

Empowerment Squared is partnering with [WEtech Alliance](#) as the project's lead implementing partner in the Windsor-Essex region, in collaboration with members of the Windsor-Essex Black Entrepreneur and Professional Program Advisory Committee. SWOBEN aims to complement the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem in Southwestern Ontario and will be working with many partners including [BLK OWNED](#), who are committed to celebrating, supporting, and elevating BIPOC entrepreneurs in the Hamilton area, and business accelerator [Innovation Factory](#), who are dedicated to helping Ontario-based businesses launch, scale and succeed.

Quotes

“Congratulations to Empowerment Squared and partners on the launch of the Southwestern Ontario Black Entrepreneurship Network in Hamilton, Windsor and online! Through the Government of Canada’s Black Entrepreneurship Program Ecosystem Fund, we are happy to support organizations like Empowerment Squared that work to ensure Black entrepreneurs have access to the capital, services, mentorship and networking opportunities they need to reach their full potential and drive inclusive economic growth in our communities.”

- *The Honourable Filomena Tassi, Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario*

“The City of Hamilton’s Strategic Plan includes an economic prosperity and growth priority in which Hamilton has a prosperous and diverse local economy where people have opportunities to grow and develop. This aspiration includes that people can successfully provide for themselves and their families, and that residents can work in the city in one of an increasing number of quality, well-paying local jobs. The Southwestern Ontario Black Entrepreneurship Network directly responds to these priorities, and builds on Empowerment Squared’s track record of driving change in our community.”

- *Andrea Horwath, Mayor, City of Hamilton*

“As the Black community continues to deal with the historical deficits caused by marginalization, we are excited to be able to invest in the development of Black entrepreneurs with an initiative that is directly formed to address their unique needs and capabilities. We are pleased to be working with excellent partners, including SWOBEN’s primary funders, FedDev Ontario, our Windsor-Essex implementing partner WEtech Alliance, and other leaders and organizations from across our community who are aligned to the Network’s mandate. SWOBEN complements the important work that Empowerment Squared leads across the world in support of empowerment through entrepreneurship, such as our HOPE Development Program for early stage entrepreneurs in Liberia.

- *Leo Nupolu Johnson, Executive Director, Empowerment Squared*

“There is a strong demand for support Black entrepreneurs in the Windsor-Essex region. Along with my colleagues on the Windsor-Essex Black Entrepreneur and Professional Program Advisory Committee, I am very proud to be part of an initiative that provides services to Black-led initiatives. Economic empowerment requires that Black communities be economically educated to run successful entrepreneurial ventures.”

- *Dr. Phillip Olla, CEO and co-founder of Audacia Bioscience*

About Empowerment Squared

Empowerment Squared is a registered Canadian charitable organization that is building a world where everyone is empowered with the tools and opportunities to thrive and contribute to society. The organization empowers newcomer, racialized and marginalized communities in Canada and Africa through educational programming, professional skills development and entrepreneurship, sports and recreation programming, and advocacy and leadership initiatives. It has supported more than 3,000 newcomer youth and families in Canada since its inception.

About FedDev Ontario

For 13 years, the Government of Canada, through FedDev Ontario, has worked to advance and diversify the southern Ontario economy through funding opportunities and business services that support innovation, growth and job creation in Canada’s most populous region. The Agency supports businesses and organizations which enables them to grow, create innovative technologies, improve productive, grow revenues, create jobs and enhance economic advancement of communities across the region. Learn more about the impacts the Agency is having in southern Ontario by exploring our pivotal projects, our Southern Ontario Spotlight, and FedDev Ontario’s Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Contacts

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