

REGIONAL AWARD WINNER – SBA REGION V

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SBA Small Business Development Center Excellence and Innovation Award

Ohio SBDC at the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce

The SBDC Excellence and Innovation Award stands at the apex of the Toledo SBDC's long list of accomplishments. Although continually recognized for its high-quality services and products during its 32-year history at the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce, at no previous time has the Toledo SBDC's resolve and commitment to its small business community been more tested and successfully proven than during the COVID-19 plague.

Rather than helplessly watch their small business clients close their doors, the Toledo SBDC pushed back through *accommodation* and employed a variety of methods of extending its reliable and high-quality counseling and training to its clients. It offered its services remotely, and safely met small business owners at their locations and anywhere else, even if it meant restaurant kitchens after 5:00 p.m. It walked businesses through online grants and assisted many businesses in reconfiguring layouts to meet COVID requirements. The Toledo SBDC innovatively developed an electric link to fill out a counseling request which allowed its advisors to process the information more efficiently, thereby enabling them to counsel more afflicted clients. Today, this link has been incorporated into the Toledo SBDC's counseling process which also includes in-person meetings, virtual meetings, and phone meetings.

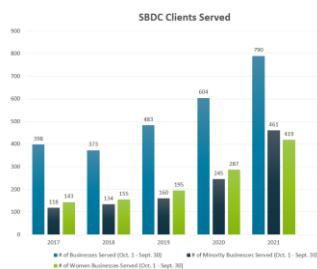
Through such accommodation, the Toledo SBDC has impressively exceeded its primary goals. Since 2017, the total number of unique clients served has increased by 90%, total counseling by 131%, capital infusion by 82%, and business starts by 57%. Its customer satisfaction metric is also high at 97%.



The Toledo SBDC also takes pride in its inclusive outreach by rendering its services to underserved communities. In addition to accommodating these clients by meeting with them regardless of location or time, the Toledo SBDC made a conscious effort to hire a diverse staff that more closely mirrored its community's demographics--be it ethnic, racial, language, or gender--in order that its advisors and clients could better relate to one another.

In addition, Jill Badger, Director, Toledo SBDC, sits on the Forward Cities Committee, an effort to provide equity and inclusion to minority businesses regarding access to capital, access to technical assistance, and access to contract opportunities. These actions have resulted in 168% growth in women business clients in five years, and 227% growth in minority clients in five years.

The strong support for the SBDC by its host chamber, the City of Toledo, and other local partners is the result of the Toledo SBDC likewise supporting and working with these entities to better assist their members and community. During COVID, the Toledo SBDC took charge and administered the Lucas County CARES grant by creating the application, itself, and reviewing them, thereby assisting many small businesses with their applications. During this time, the Toledo SBDC also worked on the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce's Reboot program which served as the first point-of-contact for any business-related questions including loans, grants, and COVID restrictions.



Jill is also a committee member on the City of Toledo Incentive Committee where she is responsible for approving any incentives the City of Toledo has to offer including, but not limited to, the revolving loan fund that provides gap funding at a low interest rate to small businesses to help them complete their projects.

As an advocate for children, Jill also worked heavily with childcare centers by helping them adapt their centers to meet all COVID requirements. This included leading a weekly call and speaking to over 100 childcare centers throughout the state on current programs that could help the centers stay open. Jill is also the Chair of the Ohio Child Care Resources and Referral Association Board (OCCRRA), which ultimately granted more than \$100M in child care grants over 18 months. Jill also sits on the Hope Toledo Board of Directors, its purpose to provide quality Kindergarten readiness.



The Ohio SBDC program is proud of the work the Toledo SBDC has done, including cultivating lasting relationships with the strong entrepreneurial resources in northwest Ohio that foster the innovative services and support for the small business community. We are confident that the Toledo SBDC will maintain its reputation for being the “go-to” place for entrepreneurs and small business owners by continuing to provide the highest level of service and products for which it has become well known.

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