

# South Haven Region Business Hub



**Every economic development strategy needs a small business dynamic.**

Much of the nation's growth comes from organizations employing fewer than 50 people. The South Haven region is a rural community that has seen a decline in small businesses over the past 10 years and has been less than successful in replenishing its small business sector. Missing from the South Haven region is the business excitement, vigorous activity, and progress around small businesses.

Our Partners: City of South Haven, South Haven Chamber of Commerce, Greater Kalamazoo Business Resources Network, and Lake Michigan College.

## Where We Got Our Start

In February 2022 Greater Kalamazoo Business Resources Network launched a small business education and development partnership in South Haven with 5 live workshops for start-ups and early growth businesses, addressing the topics of: Starting a Business, The Business Model Canvas, Marketing101, Accounting Basics, and a Meet the Funders Roundtable Discussion.

In May 2022 GKBNR announced a merger with Can-Do Kalamazoo which serves Kalamazoo County, but not Van Buren County, thus providing an opportunity for GKBRN to address gaps in small business programming in the South Haven region and led to the formation of the partnership called the South Haven Region Business Hub. This group is seeking funding to support the philosophy, formation, and operation of a critically necessary small business growth hub, on an ongoing basis.

### Demographics:

- 56 people attended the spring South Haven workshop series; an average of 11 people per event.
- More than 30% of attendees report being a startup (1-5 year) businesses.
- More than 14% of businesses report being Black owned.
- Veteran and Latinex business owners account for 4% of attendees.

### Startups:

- A lamb farmer in rural Bangor who wants to become USDA Certified
- A mattress retailer relocating to South Haven
- An HVAC contractor from Bangor is launching soon;
- A new entrepreneur is in the process of raising funds for a South Haven hostel.

### Growth:

- A mentor has been assigned to a couple who have begun a recycling plant and are looking to grow and hire 8 new employees.
- A South Haven man is preparing to scale his development business in multiple locations while working with a mentor.
- Attendance is up 20% over the fall 2021 workshop series.

## A Look Ahead

Watch us help grow minority entrepreneurs in the South Haven region with:

- Workshops that make a difference with minority groups
- Roundtables that listen, share, and impact change
- One-on-one mentors from diverse backgrounds
- Incubator shared space and resources
- Funding access for traditionally denied borrowers
- Business financial literacy for the unbanked

For more information!  
Debi Howe, Executive Director  
South Haven Region Business Hub  
debihowe1960@gmail.com  
269-207-0747

Our partners include the South Haven Foundation City of South Haven, South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce, and Lake Michigan College.

