

CITY OF HOUSTON GUIDE TO EDUCATING TRAINING RESOURCES



CITY OF HOUSTON
OFFICE
of
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY



HOUSTON BUSINESS SOLUTIONS CENTER

611 Walker St., Lobby Level
Houston, Texas 77002

www.houstontx.gov/obo
www.houstontx.gov/hbsc
832-393-0954

TABLE OF CONTENTS



OVERVIEW (DISCLAIMER)	2
DEFINITION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	2
HOW TO EVALUATE A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDER	2
BUSINESS PLANS	3
CATEGORIES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	4
EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE	3
MENTORING	5
NONPROFIT ASSISTANCE	5
COUNSELING	5
TRAINING	6
INCUBATION AND SUPPORT	7
MEMBERSHIP AND NETWORKING	8
TARGET SERVICES	9

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Business Opportunity is committed to creating a competitive and diverse business environment in the City of Houston by promoting the growth and success of local small businesses, with special emphasis on historically underutilized groups by ensuring their meaningful participation in the government procurement process.



OVERVIEW (Disclaimer)

This User Guide provides information on Houston area technical assistance providers. The Houston Business Solutions Center has worked with many of the agencies listed in this guide, and while the agencies herein have proven to offer quality services to businesses, their appearance in this publication does not imply specific endorsement. Where agencies are listed under one category, that is the predominant service offered by the agency. Many agencies offer counseling, workshops, demographics and statistics, and continuing education as well as other services. Services offered may change over time, so contact the agency for a complete overview of services provided.

WHAT IS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND WHY SHOULD YOUR BUSINESS CONSULT THIS GUIDE?

- A relationship in work or education settings in which an expert with specific technical/content knowledge provides information to address an identified need.
- Technical Assistance goals are designed to utilize recognized 'best practices' by organizations or individuals seeking answers to specific questions.
- Technical Assistance relationships are program-focused, and may use an interactive, on-site / hands-on approach as well as telephone or email assistance.
- Technical Assistance delivery is short in duration (2 or fewer contacts, with more than one person from an organization), customized to meet the needs of the client, and offers prescriptive solutions to a specific issue.

HOW DO YOU EVALUATE A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDER?

Whether you're signing up for a class or interviewing a potential mentor for your business, you should consider the following items in evaluating their competency and whether or not the agency/person is an appropriate fit for you and your business.

- Uses productive two-way communication to build a collaborative relationship that engages the participation of client;
- Understands and addresses the changing needs of client through using a variety of strategies and resources;
- Understands that the client is an integral participant in identifying needs and developing an action plan to address them;
- Provides leadership that fosters a trusting relationship with client;
- Demonstrates expertise in applying research-based knowledge and content, best practices, resources, and current technology to address the needs of client;
- Provides information on different strategies and resources available to client;
- Uses observation strategies and appropriate tools to objectively observe client/program to determine prescriptive changes needed;
- Demonstrates flexibility and a positive attitude in delivering assistance to meet the challenges and changing client needs;
- Supports goals that require different levels of intensity and timelines through understanding and planning for specific goals;
- Provides a process for ongoing planning and discussion;
- Provides support and guidance to client in developing a network of peers to address similar issues;
- Uses new knowledge and skills to assist client in capacity building;
- Employs a broad range of ideas, values and diverse perspectives;
- Provides well documented assessment and reports



WILL THEY PREPARE MY BUSINESS PLAN?

If you are seeking capital of less than \$100,000, consider creating the business plan yourself after taking a class or reading some books or getting coached by someone who has written successful business plans. Consider taking a business planning class through SCORE or the UH Small Business Development Center. Even if you decide afterwards not to write your own plan, you will have a much better idea of what you want out of the process and what to expect. Note that most technical assistance providers will not prepare a business plan for you- they will examine, critique, and assist you in creating your own plan. Additionally, there are numerous business plan software packages available to guide you through the

process. See: www.sba.gov/business-plan/1 There are some good reasons for aspiring (and existing) businesses to do the business plan themselves:

- First, because you should. If you've read sample business plans and find their accounting jargon intimidating, you are not alone. However, as long as you can clearly get your message across and have other people such as you accountant look at the plan before it goes to lenders or others, you can do this work yourself.
- By experiencing the business planning process you develop analytical thinking skills necessary to run your business, via an intimate understanding of your own business model. Going through the planning process is an invaluable business experience.
- You must know the business plan inside and out and really understand the variables and intricacies involved. You are the one who will be asked the tough questions by potential investors or lenders, such as "What will you do if only half your expected revenue comes in?" or "What will you do if you find out that direct mail is not working for you as your primary marketing tool?"

CATEGORIES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

MENTORING

NONPROFIT ASSISTANCE

COUNSELING

TRAINING

INCUBATION AND SUPPORT

MEMBERSHIP AND NETWORKING

TARGETED SERVICES

(Most agencies listed offer workshops)

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Educational resources can be offered by either public or private institutions, business schools, or agencies which provide a wide range of free or low cost services. These services include but are not limited to classes and personalized instruction.

HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP 713-718-6491

www.hccbizconnect.org

The mission of the Center for Entrepreneurship is to provide education and training for entrepreneurs and small business owners. HCC's mission fosters economic growth through business and community development. HCC offers entrepreneurship classes for those who seek to develop a business idea into a new business of their own and for those who want to expand their existing business. For locations, hours and special programs see the above website.



LONE STAR COLLEGE 832-813-6500

www.lonestar.edu/index.htm

The Lone Star College–CyFair Corporate Training Department offers a variety of customized training programs to continually enhance the skills necessary to build and retain your 21st century workforce. Here are just a few of the training possibilities: Strategic Planning, Effective Supervision, Program Design and Evaluation, Effective Meeting Planning and Facilitation, Managing your Boss, Effective Communication, Team Building, Conflict Resolution, Time Management, Stress Management, Customer Service 101, Telephone Skills.

RICE UNIVERSITY- Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Management 713-527-6060

www.business.rice.edu

Rice U. offers continuing education programs in Management, Accounting & Finance, Marketing & Strategy, Customer Satisfaction, Global Competition, and others. Some courses award CEU's. Call for fees and availability. Rice U.'s FONDREN LIBRARY (www.rice.edu/fondren/info/faq.html) provides comprehensive research information (713-348-5698).

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION 713-773-6500

www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/starting-managing-business

8701 S. Gessner, Suite 1200, Houston 77074. SBA does not make direct loans to small businesses. Rather, SBA sets the guidelines for loans, which are then made by its partners (lenders, community development organizations, and microlending institutions). The SBA guarantees that these loans will be repaid, thus eliminating some of the risk to the lending partners. When a business applies for an SBA loan, it is actually applying for a commercial loan, structured according to SBA requirements with an SBA guaranty. SBA-guaranteed loans may not be made to a small business if the borrower has access to other financing on reasonable terms. SBA loan guaranty requirements and practices can change as the Government alters its fiscal policy and priorities to meet current economic conditions.

On this website SBA has brought together the resources you need to get your business started. Whether you're writing your business plan, wondering about your legal obligations, or researching your financing options, you'll find the information you need.

TSU ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CENTER 713-313-7785

www.devweb.tsu.edu/academics/colleges_schools/Jesse_H_Jones_School_of_Business

3100 Cleburne Ave., Allen Bldg. #B-11. TSU sponsors programs on business development topics such as Business planning, technical and management assistance, marketing research, and community development projects.(FEES).

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON CLEAR LAKE Center for Advanced Management Programs

281.283.3121

prt1.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/CMP

2700 Bay Area Blvd. CAMP's mission is to provide various services to business and government organizations. Programs are designed to refine and broaden skills, to offer consulting, and to meet diverse professional and educational needs. Call for an extensive listing of upcoming events, educational programs, and counseling services.

MENTORING

Mentoring is a specialized form of counseling wherein a consistent relationship between a counselor and a business is established. Some mentoring services are free of charge while others require payment. Make sure you understand the parameters of a pay-for-mentoring relationship before you agree to participate.

SILVER FOX ADVISORS, INC. 713-467-5900

www.silverfox.org

Silver Fox executives represent diverse business disciplines and provide practical, proven, and in-depth strategies for a wide range of business situations. Each member's purpose is to improve a client's sales, productivity, processes, and profitability. Each advisor sets individual fees which are considered reasonable when compared to other alternatives such as credit courses in numerous business related fields. Silver Fox Advisors provide instruction at several off-site locations (West Houston and North Houston). Call 713-743-1060 for courses.

NONPROFIT ASSISTANCE

Today, operating a nonprofit business can be both individually rewarding and beneficial to the community. Several Houston area agencies exist for the primary purpose of assisting nonprofit business entities to survive and thrive. Please contact the agencies to determine the scope of available services, charges, and the types of nonprofits served.

EXECUTIVE SERVICE CORPS OF HOUSTON 713-780-2208

www.eschouston.org

The Executive Service Corps of Houston (ESCH) provides high quality management consulting services, at no cost, to nonprofit charitable organizations, including governmental and educational entities, using the talents, experience and energy of volunteer professionals, both active and retired. The ESCH conducts workshops and seminars to provide basic or introductory information on specific topics that are in high demand to small groups of clients such as Nonprofit Start-up and Grantwriting; Board Development; Conducting Effective Meetings; and Planning.

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS, INC. 713-667-9400

www.neighborhood-centers.org

NCI plans to create opportunities to nurture and promote entrepreneurship and small business development in neighborhoods through strategic partnerships with the City of Houston's Houston Business Development Inc. (HBD), and its various technical assistance providers network (SBA, SCORE, Urban Business Initiatives). The Neighborhood Financial Center Model creates a three-tier approach of 1) Providing technical assistance to neighborhood businesses and new entrepreneurs; 2) Creating access to multiple sources of financing (e.g., HBD, Accion Texas) targeting businesses that may not have the prerequisite record to qualify for conventional bank financing; and 3) Facilitating access to conventional financing through NCI's existing banking partnership network.

UNITED WAY OF GREATER HOUSTON

Management Assistance Program 713-685-2300

www.unitedwayhouston.org

50 Waugh Drive, Houston, Texas 77007. The Management Assistance Program (MAP) offers affordable expertise to assess current operations, offer guidance and support, and help an organization plan effectively for the future. Whether you want to update your strategic plan, organize a board retreat, host a facilitated meeting or update your HR policy, help is readily available. Nonprofit library with books, periodicals and publications on managing your nonprofit available for 2-week loan, along with Foundation Collection library and online searchable database to identify new funding opportunities for your organization. This information goldmine has downloadable documents on every subject imaginable waiting for you. If there is something missing, just let us know and we will find it for you.

COUNSELING

Many agencies and organizations provide business counseling, which can take the form of individual or group sessions. Satellite offices are often available, and repeat or follow-up meetings are encouraged. Call agencies for details, and to determine if charges apply.

SCORE - COUNSELORS TO AMERICA'S SMALL BUSINESS

713-773-6565

www.scorehouston.org

8701 S. Gessner. #1200. A service sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Admin. FREE counseling is provided by retired business owners and managers. SCORE sponsors the workshop, "Basics of Running a Small Business", held at the University of Houston twice monthly. SCORE also operates the SBA's BUSINESS SERVICE CENTER which provides information on SBA loan guarantee programs and the Business Information Center (BIC). The national SCORE office provides a new EMAIL COUNSELING service off the SCORE web page. SCORE also services the Palm Center Business Information Center (BIC)- call 713-643-8000.





U.H. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER 713-752-8400

www.sbdcnetwork.uh.edu

2302 Fannin, #200. Join the multiple thousands of small businesses that have prospered and grown with the help of the University of Houston Small Business Development Center (UH SBDC). Since 1984, UH SBDC has provided businesses assistance in the areas of business management, government procurement, international trade and manufacturing. Expertise is available to entrepreneurs in the start-up mode as well as to experienced business owners who want to take their companies to the next level. Ask about the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) which provides Business consulting, Business training, Bid matching services, Marketing assistance, Registrations and certifications, Military specs and other government documents, Accounting system setup, and Subcontracting assistance.

TRAINING

Small business training and instruction can take a number of different forms- including but not limited to on-site and remote classroom training, online training, resource libraries, organizational workshops and instruction, and periodic conferences. Training services can cater to a general business audience or a specific, target audience of entrepreneurs, and are often offered at varying levels of sophistication and complexity.

IRS VIRTUAL SMALL BUSINESS TAX WORKSHOPS

www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=200274,00.html

The Virtual Small Business Tax Workshop is composed of nine interactive lessons designed to help new small business owners learn their tax rights and responsibilities. IRS also has a free DVD of the workshop.

AMERICAN PRODUCTIVITY & QUALITY CENTER 713-681-4020

www.apqc.org

123 N. Post Oak Lane. The non-profit APQC offers instruction in Benchmarking and Total Quality Management (TQM), in addition to presenting seminars for **EXISTING** companies, training programs, and advisory services. The APQC also has an extensive library available for Center members and public memberships.

OSHA TRAINING 888-318-3497

www.oshacampus.com

OSHAcampus.com is the premier online safety training portal for construction, general industry and OSHA Outreach Training. The comprehensive catalog of self-paced, online safety training and certification courses are created for safety managers, safety trainers, construction employees, employees that deal with environmental hazards, and general workforce employees. Courses are available in "pay-per-view" online modules or can be custom packaged for organizations in a hosted virtual University and flexible Learning Management System.

SER JOBS FOR PROGRESS, INC. 713-773-6000

www.serhouston.org

SER was founded in 1965 through the combined efforts of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the G.I. Forum, and the Department of the Navy. It began as a volunteer job bank for Hispanic Veterans and is now a nationwide network of 42 affiliates operating in over 200 offices. SER focuses on delivering **workforce and social services** to the Gulf Coast Region's diverse communities. SER's **online job bank** is available for employers to find the best candidate and for job seekers to find the best career opportunity.

WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER c/o SBA

www.sba.gov/wosb

9800 Northwest Frwy, Suite 120, Houston 77092. In 1988 the SBA established the Women's Business Center Program to better help women overcome continuing barriers to success. Today there are Women's Business Centers in almost every state. These centers, along with SBA district offices and other SBA resource partners at thousands of locations nationwide help women entrepreneurs start and grow successful businesses. Each Women's Business Center tailors its services to the needs of its individual community. Each provides training in finance, management, marketing, and the Internet, as well as offering access to all of the SBA's financial and procurement assistance programs.



WORKLIFE INSTITUTE 713-266-2456

www.worklifeinstitute.com

1900 St. James Place, #880, Houston, TX 77056. The Worklife Institute is a center for resources providing worklife support for individuals and companies seeking to address with integrity the challenges of today's business environment. The Institute services include corporate consultation, training and program development in leadership, conflict resolution, professional ethics and related interests; employee assistance and career transition counseling, referral to legal and other community resources, and attorneys skilled in job-related needs. Provides services for VETERANS.

ALLIANCE FOR MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

713-776-4700

www.allianceontheweb.org

6440 Hillcroft, Suite 411, Houston TX 77081

AMCS's mission is to provide comprehensive services to refugees, immigrants and low-income residents of Harris County in order to enhance the process of their cultural adjustment and economic self-sufficiency. Over the past 25 years, AMCS's programs have included Refugee Employment, Refugee Resettlement, Refugee Case Management, Community Employment and Training, Youth Empowerment Programs, IDA, **Micro-enterprise programs**, Refugee Transportation Program, Immigration Counseling, Interpretation, and Health Education and Advocacy Services.

INCUBATION AND SUPPORT

Business incubators are programs designed to support the successful development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of business support resources and services, developed and orchestrated by incubator management and offered both in the incubator and through its network of contacts.

Incubators vary in the way they deliver their services, in their organizational structure, and in the types of clients they serve. Successful completion of a business incubation program increases the likelihood that a startup company will stay in business for the long term. Business incubators are not to be confused with "executive suites" or "virtual offices", which do not have the breadth of resources available or a graduation requirement.

BIOHOUSTON (BIOHOUSTON RESOURCE CENTER)

713-874-9300

www.biohouston.org

8030 El Rio St. Houston, TX 77054. BioHouston, Inc. is leading an effort to establish the Houston region as a vigorous global competitor in life science and biotechnology commercialization. BioHouston works with the leaders of some of the greatest research institutions in the world and interacts with scientists, venture capitalists, public officials, pharmaceutical industry leaders, and the leaders of emerging biotechnology companies. Located one mile south of the Texas Medical Center, the BioHouston Resource Center (BRC) makes it easier and more affordable for start-up companies to walk into the lab and get to work producing data, by providing access to wet lab bench space, shared equipment, and the offices and tools that start-up companies need.

HOUSTON BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, INC. BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY CENTER 713-845-2400

www.hbdinc.org/resources/business-technology-center

5330 Griggs Road, Houston 77021. The Business Technology Center (BTC), a 160,000 square feet mixed-use business complex, allows businesses to get a solid start during the early stages of development by providing essential support and assistance. From affordable office space to secretarial support, business owners can access an array of support services—all under one roof, including: Administrative support, Business Information Center, Computer labs, Conference/training rooms, Faxing, Notary, Office on demand, On-site receptionist, P.O. Box rentals, 24-hour security, Workshops/seminars, Voicemail/answering services The BTC provides business owners with access to office equipment, conference rooms, and bundled administrative support services enabling a reduction in costly overhead expenses. Within a professional and nurturing environment, new and emerging companies are given access to the tools and resources necessary for growth.



HOUSTON TECHNOLOGY CENTER 713-658-1750

www.houstontech.org

401 Pierce St., Houston 77002. The Houston Technology Center is a business accelerator that assists Houston-based emerging technology companies. HTC's 50,000 square feet, state-of-the-art Midtown facility is home to many technology entrepreneurs, sharing space in a vibrant community of young, exciting and innovative companies. HTC's office suites offer private, secured offices accessible 24/7, VOIP telecom system, network connections to printer/fax/copier and email. One hour of free IT desktop support per person per month and unlimited domestic long distance calling are included in the rent.

RICE ALLIANCE FOR TECHNOLOGY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP 713-348-3443

www.alliance.rice.edu

The Rice Alliance provides a collaborative network and forum for support, education, and exchange of ideas. It provides entrepreneurs access to the human and financial capital needed for success. Over the past 6 years, the Rice Alliance has conducted over 84 programs attended by over 17,000 individuals. Over 15,000 individuals subscribe to the Rice Alliance Digest newsletter

SERVICES COOPERATIVE ASSOC. 713-932-7495

www.servicesca.org

9600 Long Point Rd., #150. SCA provides education, networking and support for emerging businesses. Also sponsors a for-profit business incubator (Entrepreneurial Development Center). Ask about the WOMENS' BUSINESS CENTER, an INCUBATOR for first stage, women-owned companies.

TECHNOLOGY CENTER OF WEST HOUSTON (KATYDOCK) 281-829-2448

www.katydock.com

Katy Dock is the entrepreneurial hub of Katy, Texas. With an advisory board having over 300 years of experience and access to a network of investors, industry experts, and relevant experience in hand, the Katy Dock is Katy's premiere business incubator. Apart from people, Katy Dock also offers modular office space, with wi-fi connections, free coffee, and a great workspace for collaboration (essentially co-working).

U.T. RESEARCH PARK 713-792-7691

www.utresearchpark.org

1515 Holcombe Boulevard, Houston 77030. The University of Texas Research Park accelerates the product development of life science discoveries from the world's largest medical center with a focus on diagnostic and therapeutic discoveries that advance the fight against cancer, cardiovascular disorders and other diseases. Small and start-up companies can lease space with full access to common and support facilities such as cold rooms, freezers, X-ray processing, and laboratory washing and sterilization equipment. Standard laboratory modules will vary depending on the occupants' needs.

MEMBERSHIP AND NETWORKING

Membership and networking organizations include (but aren't limited to) trade associations, chambers of commerce, business societies, and independent certification and licensing entities. Oftentimes membership fees apply, as do fees for specific programs and events. In some case membership is limited to certain types of businesses, or specific geographic locations. Call for details and eligibility requirements.

BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU OF METROPOLITAN HOUSTON 713-868-9500

www.houston.bbb.org

1333 West Loop South, Suite 1200, Houston, Texas 77027. The BBB is a non-profit corporation which provides numerous support and technical services for its business members, as well as the public. The BBB publishes a membership directory, has a series of "How-To" brochures, and seminars and workshops for members and non-members.

GREATER HOUSTON BUSINESS PROCUREMENT FORUM

www.houstonbiz.org/ or info@houstonbiz.org

The Greater Houston Business Procurement Forum is an opportunity and convenient way for small business owners and operators to acquire contracts, information, and assistance from government agencies and large businesses. Small businesses network with each other and connect with larger businesses and agencies in the community. The procurement forum is intended for the Houston Business Community, emerging small business owners, and supporters of free enterprise, economic development professionals, students, friends and all other guests. Meetings held @ HCC, 5601 Loop South, 1st Floor Auditorium, Houston, TX 77081

GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP 713-844-3600

www.houston.org

The Greater Houston Partnership (GHP) was founded in 1989 with the merger of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, the Houston Economic Development Council, and the Houston World Trade Association. Today, GHP is one of the nation's most influential business organizations, representing the interests of the Houston region's enterprises- from the local entrepreneur to the Fortune 500. Through its membership, GHP represents the business interests of the 10 county Houston region - including Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, San Jacinto and Waller counties. GHP Membership provides a platform for networking and advocacy between Members that spans across industries and geographies. As a Member-driven organization, GHP provides exclusive benefits and resources to help advance business growth.

HOUSTON MINORITY SUPPLIER DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL 713-271-7805

affiliate.nmsdc.org/hmsdc/

7322 SW Freeway, #1510. The non-profit HMSDC enhances business opportunities and eliminates common barriers M/W/DBE's face in the marketplace. Offers educational and networking opportunities, as well as financing information for HMSDC members.

WOMEN'S BUSINESS ENTERPRISE ALLIANCE 713-681-9232

www.wbea-texas.org

1900 North Loop West, Suite 270. The Women's Business Enterprise Alliance is committed to increasing business opportunities for woman-owned businesses and corporate members through education, programs, and professional networking. WBE Certification is a nationally recognized and accepted designation for businesses that are at least 51% owned, managed and controlled by a woman or women. WBE status can be used as a marketing tool to source contracts with both national and regional "corporate members" which include corporations, non-profit organizations and government agencies.

TARGETED SERVICES

Service providers which assist specific types of businesses.

EXPORT ASSISTANCE CENTER - US INTERNATIONAL TRADE ADMINISTRATION 713-718-3062

www.export.gov/index.asp

500 Dallas, Suite 1160. The ITA assists in exporting, including licensing, financing, statistics, market research and analysis, and education for existing businesses. Ask for pamphlet, "Export Programs: A Business Directory of U.S. Government Services". For information on Federal export resources, call the Trade Information Center (TIC) toll-free at 800-872-8723 or 800-USA-TRADE. The TIC also has telephone numbers for country desk officers who answer questions on taxes, trade policies, and regulations.





@houstonobo



facebook.com/houstonobo

For more information, visit www.houston.tx.gov/obo or call 832.393.0600



EDUCATE. CONNECT. GROW.