

Volunteer Position Description: Business Mentor

ABOUT WEDI

WEDI strengthens communities through a continuum of educational and financial resources, removing systemic barriers to economic equity for all Western New Yorkers.

Website

www.wedibuffalo.org

Programs Overview

WEDI's mission is to strengthen communities through a continuum of educational and financial resources, removing systemic barriers to economic equity for all Western New Yorkers. Founded in 2006 by members of the Westminster Presbyterian Church to improve the quality of life for residents of Buffalo's West Side, WEDI (the Westminster Economic Development Initiative) has two focus areas—Education and Economic Development—and numerous programs including the West Side Bazaar. This dual focus makes WEDI unique among its peers. With a passionate, diverse staff that is representative of the constituents it serves, WEDI is well-poised to realize its vision that all residents of Western New York can succeed and thrive in a culturally inclusive community.

ABOUT MENTORING

Title

Volunteer Business Mentor

Staff Supervisor

Economic Development Director

Purpose:

Business Mentors are professionals who leverage their experience to provide a higher quality of individualized, relationship-based services for the emerging entrepreneurs served by WEDI serves. Mentors offer these entrepreneurs the support and guidance they need to grow their skills as business owners and ensure their business can succeed. Mentors strengthen Buffalo's economic and social fabric by creating meaningful relationships that lead to greater economic agency for its most underserved populations.

Key Responsibilities:

Business Mentors go through WEDI's standard volunteer process, then a special orientation for mentors. After orientation and paperwork, including a confidentiality agreement, is complete,

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they will work with WEDI staff (community engagement coordinator and relationship managers) to arrange for client interaction & communication. Once a suitable client match is found, the mentor meets with the client(s) and takes ownership of managing the relationship and communication. The mentor logs every meeting and any other assistance they provide to the client on at least a monthly basis and sends to the Community Engagement Coordinator. Mentors attend mandatory quarterly trainings and have the option to participate in other development opportunities. Mentors abide by the policies of WEDI and act in the best interests of the client at all times.

Requirements:

WEDI requires business mentors to have some professional experience in business and/or working with diverse populations but takes into consideration a broad range of life experience when approving volunteer applicants. The most important quality in a mentor is their skill at relating to WEDI's business owners respectfully and productively, followed by their conscientiousness in responding to WEDI staff and logging the time they donate. A brief bio, photo, and description of their expertise must be uploaded to Fiveomics before working directly with clients.

Commitment:

Business mentors will commit to working with WEDI for a minimum of 6 months and would be able to renew their commitment to an individual business owner every 6 months. The CEC will manage this process by having individual meetings or phone/email communication with the mentor to discuss their commitment.

Meetings:

Mentors and clients will agree to meet for a minimum of one hour per meeting biweekly at first and can mutually agree to meet more or less frequently depending on the business needs, but not less than one hour per month. Mentors and clients can mutually agree to communicate over email or phone between virtual meetings. Meetings, when allowed and both parties are comfortable with the decision, can be in-person and mostly on-site at the business location during times when the business is closed. Meetings should always be held in a public location.

Business Needs:

All WEDI clients must sign a release allowing WEDI to share information with the business mentor. WEDI will prepare an electronic file folder for the mentor (and paper, if needed) with the crucial business documents that will help them in assisting the business, such as Business Plan, P&Ls, taxes, etc. WEDI staff will rescind Personally Identifiable Information whenever possible. When the client agrees to work with a business mentor, they will choose at least one area in which they would like help improving their business.

Reporting:

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The business mentors are responsible for logging their hours at minimum by the first day of the month for the month previous, including brief notes about progress made.

Conflict of Interest Policy:

All volunteers must sign a Conflict-of-Interest agreement and Non-Disclosure (confidentiality) agreement. Volunteering with WEDI does not constitute an employment relationship and does not entitle the volunteer to any remuneration or benefits of employment.

ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

Professional Development:

WEDI holds quarterly mandatory training/networking events for mentors. Topics are chosen by current mentors, and often presented by mentors with specialized knowledge in the topic area. WEDI also will alert mentors to trainings in the community available to them and their clients. WEDI will facilitate networking among mentors whenever possible.

Resources and Support On a day-to-day basis:

WEDI staff are available for advice and assistance. Mentors will have login credentials to WEDI's Fiveomics so that they can track their hours and look up relevant client information at any point. WEDI is growing its online resource library that mentors have exclusive access to, which can supplement the mentor's own knowledge and connections. Mentors are encouraged to create short videos about their expertise for WEDI's Fiveomics App. WEDI regularly recognizes its volunteers through traditional and social media (with permission).

As-Needed Expertise:

All business mentors will be notified first of individual opportunities to assist other WEDI clients on a case-by-case basis (for example, a producer needs one-time advice navigating import/export laws). Some mentors may choose to be involved solely using this structure, rather than being matched to a single client. Mentors will frequently be asked to facilitate WEDI virtual webinars in our series:
WEDI Wednesdays.

Contact information: info@wedibuffalo.org
Office: 716.393.4088

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