

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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**NEW YORK CITY LAUNCHES THREE NEW MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS TO
SUPPORT WOMEN AND MINORITY-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS AND
ADVANCE BLACK ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Programs to Serve 1,500 Businesses in 2021

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) Commissioner Jonnel Doris today announced three new [mentorship programs](#), ‘Small Business Mentors NYC,’ ‘BE NYC Mentors,’ and ‘M/WBE Mentors,’ which will provide industry experts as guides for current and aspiring entrepreneurs seeking to start and grow a business in a post-COVID era. These programs are expected to serve 1,500 businesses in 2021. SBS’ first mentorship program, [WE Connect Mentors](#), has engaged women mentors to work with over 1,700 women entrepreneurs since 2019.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every small business in our city – but our Black entrepreneurs and Minority and Women-Owned Businesses have been hit especially hard,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “These businesses will be the beating heart of our economic recovery, and New York City is committed to giving them the guidance and advice they need to succeed in this pandemic and beyond.”

“Small businesses are vital to the fabric of New York City and serve as the cornerstones of our communities,” said **J. Phillip Thompson, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives and Co-Chair of the Racial Inclusion and Equity Taskforce**. “Our economic recovery depends on the ability of small business owners to succeed, and the City is helping to ensure we recover with equity by providing critically important mentorship programs to those in underrepresented and hardest-hit communities who need them most.”

“Mentorship, especially from business owners who have faced similar challenges, is a key component of business success,” said **Jonnel Doris, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services**. “Our growing list of mentors come from a range of industries including food, professional services, and financial services, and are ready to guide minority and women owned businesses, entrepreneurs recovering from COVID-19, and emerging entrepreneurs launching the businesses of tomorrow.”

“Networks are a crucial ingredient of small business success, and all too often, entrepreneurs of color lack access to the insider advice they need to get ahead,” said **Sideya Sherman, Executive Director of the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity and EVP, Community Engagement & Partnerships, NYCHA**. “Through these new mentorship programs, entrepreneurs of color and those in the communities hardest-hit by COVID-19 will have access to industry experts who can offer technical assistance, practical advice, and encouragement as they work to adapt and grow their businesses in the wake of the pandemic.”

“Our landmark survey of over 1,500 Black entrepreneurs showed that less than 40% of respondents had sufficient access to mentors and supporters to help launch and scale a business,” said **Ken Ebie, Executive Director of Black Entrepreneurs NYC (BE NYC)**. “BE NYC Mentors seeks to solve this problem by connecting talented entrepreneurs with experienced mentors in various industries, positioning them for long-term success.”

Small Business Mentors NYC is a mentorship program for existing storefront business owners in underrepresented communities seeking to grow their businesses. The program, introduced by the Mayor’s Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity, will provide these businesses with specialized guidance and professional networks. The City has worked with 14 entrepreneurs who have successfully pivoted their businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic, and who will mentor storefront business owners in New York City. These mentors will include:

- Aysha Saeed, CEO, Creative Director, *Aysha New York*
- Yoon Joo Lee, CEO, *Janchi Myeonga*
- Echo Wu, Executive, *Shaxian Snacks*
- Karen Mitchell, CEO, *True Indian Hair*
- Dorian Mercir, Founder & CEO, *Dorian’s Seafood Market*
- Yolanda Felder, Life Coach and TV Host, *The Yolanda Felder Show*
- Carmen Ferreyra, CEO, *Porteñas*
- Emelyn Stuart, Owner, *Stuart Cinema & Café*
- Kalima De Suze, Owner, *Cafe con Libros*
- Zhenya Globazh, Co-founder, *Shiba500*
- Janna Meyrowitz Turner, President, *Style House*
- Maria Iglesias and Cynthia Shephard, Mother/Daughter Owners, *Corazon de Mexico Restaurant & Bar*
- Mary Nittolo, Founder & Creative Director, *The Studio*
- Zachary Sharaga, Owner, *Dear Mama Coffee*
- Mark Connell, Owner, *Botanica Bar*
- Ayala Donchin, Founder & Executive Chef, *Evelyn’s Kitchen*
- Dawn Kelly, CEO, *The Nourish Spot*

BE NYC Mentors is New York City's inaugural business mentorship program for Black entrepreneurs in the pre-startup and early stages of operating their business. The program aims to increase the number of new Black-owned businesses in high-growth industries, with a programmatic focus on pre-startup and newly formed businesses. The growing list of Black entrepreneurs and industry leaders that will mentor emerging Black entrepreneurs in New York City includes:

- Ayme Sinclair, CEO & Founder, *Sinclair Social*
- Precious Williams, CEO, *Perfect Pitches by Precious*
- Tiffany Joy Murchinson, CEO, *TJM & Company*
- Yannize Joshua, Co-owner & Managing Partner, *The Technique Group*
- Gayle Jennings-O’Byrne, CEO, *WOCstar Fund*

- Nekpen Osuan, Principle, *WomenWerk*
- Ariane Hunter, Founder, *Project She Went for Her Dreams*
- Mark Hayles, Founder & CEO, *Better Local Business Agency LLC*
- Malla Haridat, Owner, *New Designs for Life Training Company*
- Khalilah Webster, Co-founder & COO, *Vanguard Consulting Group* and Managing Partner at *Minority Venture Partners*
- Celeste Morris, President, *MorrisAllsop Public Affairs*
- Kim Fontaine, Esq, Owner, *Perry Blair Consulting*
- Alain Leroy, Chief Operating and Innovation Officer, *The Gentlemen's Factory*
- Kofi Kankam, Founder, *Admit.me*
- Ron J. Williams, Head of Strategy, *Citi Ventures D10X*

M/WBE Mentors is the first peer mentorship program for NYC's certified Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs). The program will help M/WBEs to further build their professional networks and expand their access to resources and contracting opportunities. The following entrepreneurs have successfully led their businesses through the pandemic, and will mentor certified M/WBEs to introduce them to government contracting and expand their businesses:

- Penda Aiken, President and CEO, *Penda Aiken, Inc*
- Hugo E. Almeida, CEO, *Abitronix, LLC*
- Denise Arboleda, Vice-President of Sales, *Compulink Technologies, Inc.*
- KY Chow, President, *GM Printing*
- Micoy Hamilton, CEO, *Nifty Concept, Inc.*
- Barbara Armand Kushner, President, *Armand Corporation*
- Colleen Molter, President, *QED National*
- Nayan Parikh, Founder & President, *Ashnu International, Inc.*
- Rafael Perez, Jr., President, *GCCOM Construction Company, Inc.*
- James Peterson, CEO/ Executive Chef, *E.A.T. w/ Culinary Arts Professionals*
- Francilia Wilkins Rahim, CEO, *R.F. Wilkins Consultants*
- Elizabeth Velez, President, *Velez Organization*

You can now sign-up for 'BE NYC Mentors' and 'Small Business Mentors NYC' upcoming sessions. M/WBE Mentors will host their first kickoff event in January. For more information on each mentorship program visit nyc.gov/businessmentors.

"Investing, shopping and mentoring other black businesses is imperative for the economic health of all New Yorkers," said **Gayle Jennings-O'Byrne, BE NYC Cabinet Member, BE NYC Mentor, and Co-Founder of the WOCstar Fund.** "I am honored to do my part as a mentor for the BE NYC program to advance black entrepreneurship in New York City."

"Business mentorship is crucial because in times of uncertainty, knowledge is power. Mentors can help you avoid making mistakes that could cause serious consequences for your business" said **Maria Iglesias, owner of Corazon de Mexico Restaurant & Bar.**

“Mentorship is important because it’s paying it forward,” said **Barbara Armand Kushner, M/WBE Mentor and President of Armand Corporation**. “If a Minority Owned Business or Woman Owned Business comes to me with a business challenge and I can share some knowledge because I’ve had that problem in the past, I pay it forward by mentoring that business about how to plow through that challenge. When I do that, then I’ve done my job as a Mentor.”

“I’m excited to see the BE NYC Mentors program paving the way towards a better future for Black businesses in New York City,” said **Sekou Kaalund, Head of the Northeast Division for Chase Consumer Bank and BE NYC Cabinet Member**. “Sharing tools, resources and advice with Black entrepreneurs will help ensure that they are positioning their businesses for success and creating legacies of wealth for future generations.”

“As an entrepreneur, mentorship has played a pivotal role in the success of my business,” said **Jeff Lindor, BE NYC Cabinet Member and Founder of The Gentlemen's Factory Inc.** “The launch of BE NYC Mentors is a great addition to the black business ecosystem in the City of New York. It will help strengthen the current entrepreneur community and help usher in the next generation of innovators.”

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