

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT THE POLSKY EXCHANGE



Through its Polsky Exchange, the Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation provides significant resources and programming for community entrepreneurs, as part of the University of Chicago's commitment to supporting strong, vibrant communities in the neighborhoods surrounding its South Side campus.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURS:

- **Community Business Workshops** – A monthly series with topics ranging from “Equity Crowdfunding” to “Brick and Mortar Basics.” These workshops serve over 300 businesses annually.
- **South Side Pitch** – An annual event hosted with the Institute for Justice Clinic at the University of Chicago Law School that gives finalists an opportunity to pitch before a panel of judges and a live audience of over 350 for a prize package valued at over \$10,000.
- **Inner City Capital Connections** – In partnership with the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, this intensive one-day capacity-building program supported 87 companies, of which 74% were minority-owned and 54% were woman-owned.
- **UChicago Local** – A collaboration with the University's Office of Civic Engagement to provide businesses and residents with training and connections that help them work more closely with the University and UChicago Medicine.
- **Fab Lab Design Consultancy** – Trainees in an advanced manufacturing training program in the neighboring Woodlawn community gain hands-on digital fabrication experience at Polsky's Fab Lab and receive full Polsky Exchange access and member benefits.
- **Community Lender Showcases** – Partner events with community lenders to showcase relevant new products and help businesses understand options available in an effort to gain access to capital.

## BY THE NUMBERS:

- 600 (or 20% of total Exchange members) are community entrepreneurs.
- More than 50% of Polsky Exchange members are minorities.

## WHO IS CONSIDERED A COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEUR?

Anyone in the local and extended community surrounding the University of Chicago who does not have a formal affiliation with the university, but is interested in entrepreneurship or becoming a business owner.

## CAN COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURS HAVE ACCESS TO THE POLSKY EXCHANGE?

Yes, community entrepreneurs are eligible to become members of the Polsky Exchange, which includes 1:1 mentorship, Fab Lab prototyping, and approximately 450 programs a year.

## QUESTIONS?

Contact Alyssa Berman-Cutler, Director of Community Economic Development Initiatives, at [alyssabc@uchicago.edu](mailto:alyssabc@uchicago.edu)