

Arkansas Business Navigator Podcast Episode 22: Program Ending and Next Steps, On Ramp Funding Available to ABN businesses, Full-day HR Seminar Nov 7



[Kam] Hey, guys, Kam is here.

[Brandon] And this is Brandon.

[Kam] This marks the last episode of the Arkansas Business Navigator podcast, and we thought it would be fitting for both of us to hop on the pod together for the final wrap up. Today's show includes updates on the impact and future of the Arkansas Business Navigator program and exclusive funding opportunity for businesses that have engaged with the Navigator program and events happening in Arkansas.

[Brandon] Kam, I'm excited to dive in and do this pod with you, man. So let's get started.

[Intro Music]

[Brandon] Just as a refresher, Arkansas Business Navigator was a two-year pilot program funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Over the last two years, seven organizations partnered with the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Lead Center at U.S. Little Rock to expand training, counseling and assistance to small business owners and entrepreneurs. The pilot is coming to an end effective November 30th. So, what does that mean for you?

If you have worked with one of the seven partner organizations or the lead center, you should receive communication from them as to what their transition plan will be. Some organizations will have the capacity to continue working with you as a client despite the program ending. Others will not. We are one of the organizations that will cease to offer one on one technical assistance and training at the end of the month for the Navigator program. You will be receiving communication from us on how to continue accessing free confidential support as we close out our participation in the program. What if you are a current client? If you are an active client, we will either connect you with an SBA, TDC lead center counselor who oversees the program, or will connect you with a regional ISB TDCJ Center so you can continue receiving assistance. We are working diligently to wrap up projects.

[Transition Music]

[Kam] If you are listening to this podcast and you attended an event or are no longer an active client, you will still get an email explaining the transition and how you can continue to receive support should your knees change in the future.

There are guides and worksheets developed through the Arkansas Business Navigator program available on our statewide website. That website and its contents will remain active through spring of 2024 so you can access them. For example, there's an English and Spanish food tour guide and a short video series called Small Business Breaks on topics such as hiring, textiles and technology.

As the program wraps up, you will see information about our collective accomplishments. But Brenda and I wanted to highlight a few. Over 500 Arkansans were assisted through the program. We have

completed more than 3,800 counseling hours, 500 training hours, and trained almost 4,000 individuals over the last two years. Over 450 jobs were created or retained due to the program.

[Transition Music]

[Kam] Now we're going to highlight the exclusive funding opportunity with On Ramp funding. Arkansas Business Navigator may be ending, but we have a resource you need to take advantage of On Ramp: Fund for Fuel. Your business growth is an exclusive funding opportunity for businesses that have been engaged with the Arkansas Business Navigator program. This is 100% guarantee for up to \$10,000. That's right, 100%. No money down needed. What about your credit score? Good or bad, you still apply. You'll need to have last year's sales or annualized sales based on the most recent six months. This fund was designed to be a lifeline when something goes wrong. For example, maybe you blew the motor on your food truck, maybe your espresso machine went down, maybe you just moved your boutique to a new location, and you need more hardware. This fund could be a great option for you with no money down and a reasonable interest rate. If you're interested in applying, check our show notes for the application. It only takes a minute to fill out. You may be wondering what happens if I don't apply before November 30th? No worries. You can continue to apply until our phones run dry.

[Transition Music]

[Brandon] There are still events happening around the state. November has several events you can take advantage of, including two featuring Deborah Torres, digital marketing strategist who's talking about A.I. and incorporating AI products into your business to reach more customers and save you time and money. The Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce is also having two more air businesses events in Bella Vista and Queen. Kam and I are excited to share a big opportunity to get your H.R. questions answered.

On November 7th, we're hosting Glenda Caton, a human resource professional with more than 20 years of experience, to talk about hiring your first employee and what small business owners need to know. Glenda is a 2023 Small Business Impact Award winner for SB, TDC and the little rock chamber of commerce. She's a senior certified HR Professional and is a licensed agent for health and life insurance. She also holds certificates and "Employing Abilities", "Hiring Our Heroes," and "Getting Talent Back to Work." Most recently, she was named Goldman Sachs 10,000 small businesses and is part of the inaugural Arkansas class. This is a workshop that isn't just for startups.

If you have questions about compensation, disciplinary actions, what the process of hiring looks like, you do not want to miss this event. This four-day workshop is from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and includes a luncheon. Refreshments for in-person attendees can't make it in-person. Join us via zoom. Registration is required and you can find the link in the show notes.

[Transition Music]

[Kam] These are our final remarks. You know, we want to thank you guys for working with us. Between Brandon and I, we work with over 50 businesses through the Navigator program. We wish you well on your journey to prosperity. We hope that we're able to lessen the burden on you as a small business owner. We know you guys are dealing with a lot, especially in this climate. We just wish you well and hope you do the best you can moving forward. So I'll kick it to Brandon.

[Brandon] Yeah, absolutely. Kam. Yeah. I just want to echo that sentiment. You know, we've really enjoyed being to work with you all, whether it was, you know, sitting down and helping with business plans or helping put together financial projections and seeing some of you just get those loan proposals submitted and approved, you know, that's really exciting for us to be able to say we were able to help you through that process. And so, from the bottom of our hearts, we just thank you so much for letting us be a part of your small business journey and success. And, you know, we continue to wish you well throughout many years to come and look forward to seeing your business grow and prosper.

[Outro Music]

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