



Urban Hope Entrepreneur Hub in Green Bay helps business people help peers

When people think about Urban [Hope](#) Entrepreneur Hub in Green Bay, E-Hub for short, they often think of it as a program for entrepreneurs looking to start a first business. Yet, that is only a small part of E-Hub's mission.

"Over 50 percent of those taking our classes are already in business," said Mark Burwell, national director of E-Hub. "We have people who want to launch a business, people who are looking to [invest](#), and those who want to mentor small businesses."

Burwell has seen coaches, counselors, specialists, retired bankers and business executives go through the 12-class program. These people may never do a business start-up but might want to [learn](#) in order to assist entrepreneurs. In a recent program, three of the participants wanted to add to existing experience to become SCORE counselors.

"We have people who want to give back by becoming mentors," Burwell said. "Let's say you have an executive who has experience in a big [business](#) environment, but not directly in a small business. We're kind of a training camp where they get to hear all of the aspects of running a small business."

Completion of the program may result in a Mentor Advantage Certificate. The training can be put to use as a volunteer or potential investor. Burwell considers the process to be "economic gardening," a second stage of business growth when [businesses](#) get to the point where they need to grow and need help to do so.

Rather than waiting for a budding business to grow, economic gardening is proactive. It partners entrepreneurs with mentors, peers, and valuable resources.

"This is the fertilizer that is needed to cultivate the bumper crop," Burwell said.

Entrepreneurs make connections and develop mutually beneficial relationships. By the time they are finished taking one of the E-Hub sessions, they have a group of people that can help them. Burwell said that there is an understanding that no one can do everything in a successful small business.

"It's one of the biggest problems that small businesses have in America," he said. "Everyone is suppose to wear all the hats, and that's the worst thing you can do. Entrepreneurs need to get out of the box and surround themselves with a team of paid and unpaid people."

The end product of economic gardening is connections. It is a long-term process of nurturing and evolving. It requires a mix of good programs and recognition from public officials, businesses and citizens that focus on small businesses, not only the large ones.

"Some city leaders will continue to recruit for big business, which is all right, but cultivating our existing small businesses will keep a lot of money, talent, wealth and resources in our communities," Burwell said.

Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt is co-owner of DB Commercial Real Estate in Green Bay and assistant district director for SCORE, Wisconsin.