

Help! Where Can I Get Some Support?

Resources for the New and Established Business Owner in Connecticut

Author: Kimberly A. Gaskins, MBA

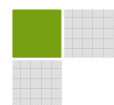
As a new or established business it is important to know the resources available to you for possible mentoring, educational, and/or financial assistance. These resources are helpful for in establishing or growing your business. When utilizing any of these resources, be you have a clear idea of what you are looking for and how you will determine if they were worth your time and effort.

Mentors

A mentoring relationship can help you grow your business. By working with one or more persons who have experience in your field or desired field can help you accomplish your goals. They can be someone for you to seek advice from and work through ideas with. See my article “Are You the One? Finding the Perfect Mentor” for more information on characteristics of a good mentor.

- **Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)** www.score.org – SCORE is non-profit organization dedicated to the education and mentoring of entrepreneurs throughout the United States. They offer free online and in-person counseling. Below is the connect information for offices in Connecticut.

City	Chapter	Contact
New Haven, CT	New Haven SCORE Gateway Community College 60 Sargent Drive New Haven, CT 06511-5918	Phone: (203) 865-7645 Fax: <i>Unavailable</i>
Bridgeport, CT	Greater Bridgeport SCORE 230 Park Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06604	Phone: (203) 576-4369 Fax: (203) 576-4388
Danbury, CT	Western Connecticut SCORE City Hall 155 Deer Hill Avenue Danbury, CT 06810	Phone: (203) 794-1404 Fax: <i>Unavailable</i>



City	Chapter	Contact
Norwalk, CT	Fairfield County SCORE 24 Belden Avenue 5th Floor Norwalk, CT 06850 www.ctsbdc.org - CT SBDC receives funding from the Small Business Administration (SBA) , CT State University System, public and private contribution. 6850	Phone: (203) 847-7348 Fax: (203) 849-9308

- **CT Small Business Development Center** – <http://www.ctsbdc.org> - I am not sure if your counselor is assigned from SCORE or from their personal database but you can request a counselor by contacting the office nearest you.
- **Local Chamber of Commerce** – Your Local Chamber of Commerce is a good source for identifying other mentoring programs in your area that may exist. Contact them to see if they are aware of other programs available.
- **Organizations and Associations** – Check out organizations and associations in your industry to see if they offer mentoring programs.
- **Find your own** – Select a person or persons who have impressed you with their insight and perceptiveness.
- **Support Groups** – Sites like www.meetup.com provide a list of likeminded individuals meeting in your area to discuss various topics. Visit these sites to see what is going on and visit a few to see if they meet your needs for support.

Education

Your professional development can be invaluable to the growth of your business. Attending workshops and seminars and help spark new ideas on how to handle day to day operations reinforce what you are doing in your business or connect you with potential clients. It is important to know your budget for your professional development and what types of events you would like to attend. Once you have determined your budget and the types of events you are interested do an internet search for workshops and seminar in those areas. You can also check out these sites for free or low cost course offered:

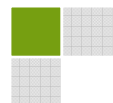


- **SCORE** - www.score.org – Besides workshops and seminars offered by local SCORE offices, you can take advantage of online workshops at www.score.org. You will find workshops on starting your business, growing your business, marketing your business and managing your finances.
- **CT Small Business Development Center** – Besides their counseling services they assist small businesses by offering seminars and workshops in person at their regional offices as well as online. The topics covered are similar to SCORE but have additional subtopics. Their online course selection is fairly extensive. Registration is required to access classes.
- **Small Business Administration (SBA)** – www.sba.gov - The SBA has an extensive list of online workshops. Besides the typical topics found on the SCORE and CT SBDC site you can find workshops on obtaining government contracts, business management and surveying a slow economy. You can also watch videos or listen to podcasts.
- **Women Business Center** - www.ctwbdc.org – The WBDC’s goal is to increase economic independence for women. This is accomplished through Small Business and Professional Development Training-specifically, small business and micro-enterprise training, career assistance, networking, and access to applicable resources. Offices are offered throughout the state and the list can be found at:

http://www.sba.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/sba_homepage/sba_pr_wbc_ed.pdf

There are nominal fees for some of the training programs but scholarships may be available. You can also become a member of the Women’s Business Center.

- **The Entrepreneurial Center** - www.hartford.edu/ec/index.html - located at the University of Hartford they have a WBDC which services men and women as well as other entrepreneurial services. They have workshops on assessing your preparedness for Self-Employment, business planning and other business skills. There may be a nominal fee for some of the seminars and workshops as well.
- **Ed2Go** – www.ed2go.com - Offers online course in a variety of business areas and computer training.
- **Adult Education Departments** - Check out your local adult education programs to see if they offer courses to meet your business needs.



Financial Assistance

Most small businesses use personal funds and family loans when they start their business. This is definitely the easiest funding to get but can quickly run dry. Before you become desperate for funds it is wise to explore your options for financing. The SBA website (www.sba.gov) is a good place to start when looking for lenders who offer SBA Guaranteed loans. Please note the SBA typically requires 2-3 years of sales history before they will guarantee your loan and banks may use the four C's (credit history, character, cash flow and collateral) and at least 2 years of profitable sales to determine if you will be approved for a loan.

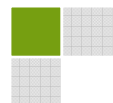
If you are in the start-up phase of your business look for Microloans. These loans are available to start-up companies or those who need smaller amounts. The loans are normally up to \$35,000. Usually they are easier to receive.

Below are a few financing options to consider:

Financing Option	Upside	Downside
Debt Financing – Loan or line of credit with a bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't have to give up equity• Available if you can't get equity funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must pay interest• Limited networking• May require personal collateral
Grants – Government, other	Free Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highly competitive• Restrictions on how funds are used• Hard to find
Equity Financing – private investment in exchange for a share in ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convenient• Fewest contractual strings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One-time source of funding• Expensive
Angel Investor – high net worth private investor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$25M to \$1MM• Overall patient about their investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often difficult to find• If group, potential conflicts in investment interests
Venture Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Networking in addition to fund• Multiple fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Want rapid return on investment• Usually you have to sell business, go public or share control

Some Loan Options in CT

Below are some loan options available in the State of CT. Please contact each lending entity directly for details on the availability of funds. Remember most banks will look at the 4 C's (character, credit history, cash flow and collateral).



Information from: http://www.ctsmallbusiness.com/cookbookindex/financial_resources.html

CHEFA Guaranteed Loans www.chefa.com

The Connecticut Health & Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) issues tax-exempt bonds for facility acquisition and rehabilitation, equipment acquisition, and new construction for colleges and universities, private independent primary and secondary schools, charter schools, long-term care facilities, hospitals, child care providers, cultural institutions, and other qualified nonprofits. Guaranteed Loans are for both non-profit and for profit child care facilities. Loan size is between \$25,000 and \$1million for the purpose of construction, renovation, equipment acquisition or working capital.

Connecticut Community Investment Corp. (CTCIC) www.ctcic.org

The Connecticut Community Investment Corp. (CTCIC) is a private non-profit corporation providing economic development financing to qualified small businesses throughout Connecticut. CTCIC was established as a local development corporation under U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) regulations. CTCIC offers loan products and business consulting services to Connecticut small businesses, including the SBA 504 Loan Program, the Defense Loan, the Microloan, the Child Care Microloan and the Technology Investment Fund.

Connecticut Development Authority (CDA) www.ctcda.com.

The Connecticut Development Authority (CDA) provides financing including direct loans, revenue bonding and loan guarantees to businesses in Connecticut for working capital, equipment and real estate. Direct Loan program supplements capital needs of borrowers with below-market interest rate loans to induce an enterprise to expand or relocate to Connecticut. The Guaranteed and Participating Loans are available through private sector commercial lenders and can cover up to 40 percent of a loan. SBA 504 Loans provide secured fixed-rate financing for acquisition of equipment and real property with long-term financing. Urbank program issues loans up to \$500,000 to small businesses unable to obtain conventional financing, with special emphasis on minority and women-owned businesses. Manufacturers can take advantage of Industrial Revenue bond program. The bonds can be issued for up to \$10 million and can equal 100 percent of project cost. Some programs applicable to targeted communities only.

Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) www.ct.gov/ecd

The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) provides incentive-driven direct loans for projects when there is strong economic development potential.

Empower New Haven www.cityofnewhaven.com

Empower New Haven includes grants for economic development projects, job training and placement, business development and commercial real estate projects. Tax exempt bonds provide low interest financing for businesses that relocate or expand in Empowerment Zone areas and tax credits are available for employers that train and hire residents from low income neighborhoods.



Export Working Capital (EWCP) www.sbaonline.sba.gov/financing/loanprog/ewcp.html

Export Working Capital (EWCP) was designed to provide short-term working capital to exporters. The program encourages lenders to offer export working capital loans by guaranteeing repayment of up to \$1 million or 90 percent of a loan amount, whichever is less. A Small Business Administration (SBA) program.

Greater Hartford Business Development Center (GHBDC) www.hedco-ghbdc.com

The Hartford Economic Development Corp. (HEDCo) and the Greater Hartford Business Development Center (GHBDC) work to stimulate economic development in the Hartford Metropolitan Area to help start, finance, retain, and recruit small businesses within Hartford and its 57 surrounding cities and towns. HEDCo provides small businesses with business support needs that would be otherwise un-met or under-served. HEDCo partners with GHBDC to foster the community relationships crucial to economic growth and provides small businesses in the region with alternative financing.

LowDoc Program www.sbaonline.sba.gov/financing/lendinvest/lowdoc.html.

LowDoc Program reduces the amount of paperwork and red tape involved in getting small business loans of \$150,000 or less. The simplified application process allows a rapid response from SBA. Approval focuses on character, credit and experience. Calls for a response from the SBA within 36 hours of receiving a complete application. A Small Business Administration (SBA) program.

Microloan Program www.ctcic.org

The CTCIC's Microloan Program, established by the SBA, provides from \$500 to \$35,000 to start-up, recently established or growing small businesses.

Middletown Business Loan Program www.middletownplanning.com/Divisions/economy.html

Middletown Business Loan Program helps new and existing businesses and industries succeed in Middletown. The Economic Development Division helps businesses access city programs and directs businesses to other programs offered through other organizations.

Non-Profit Revolving Loan Fund www.hedco-ghbdc.com/g-nonprofit.html

Non-Profit Revolving Loan Fund assists 501(c) (3) Non Profits manage short-term cash flow needs and/or assist in site improvements and purchase of capital equipment. Applicants must be located in the 40 town area, primarily the Capital Region and Tolland County. Focusing on short-term cash flow needs, the loans vary up to \$75,000 and must be used for the acquisition and/or renovation of commercial or industrial real estate, the purchase of machinery and equipment, or short-term working capital. A Hartford Economic Development Corp. (HEDCo) and Greater Hartford Business Development Center (GHBDC) program.

Preferred/Certified Lenders www.sbaonline.sba.gov/ct/ctdopl.html



Preferred/Certified Lenders are those who have been heavily involved in regular SBA loan-guaranty processing and have met certain other criteria. They receive a partial delegation of authority and are given a three-day turnaround by the SBA on their applications. Maximum loan amount is \$2 million. A Small Business Administration (SBA) program.

Regional Business Investment Fund (RBIF) www.nvdc.org

Regional Business Investment Fund (RBIF) creates and retains jobs in the Central Naugatuck Valley Region by providing financial assistance to eligible businesses in the designated areas. A Naugatuck Valley Development Corp. (NVDC) program.

Small Direct Loans www.chefa.com

Small Direct Loans are intended for family child-care homes and to provide pre-development loans for child care centers. Loan size is limited to \$25,000 and funds may be used for licensure, upgrading educational equipment or adding an addition. A Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority

URBANK Entrepreneurial Loan Program www.entrepreneurialctr.org

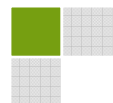
The URBANK Entrepreneurial Loan Program provides start-up loans to entrepreneurs lacking access to capital. Eligible applicants must be Entrepreneurial Center clients in good standing and meet requirements of training program with complete written business plan. Statewide availability through Urbank with a maximum loan amount \$500,000.

Business Information Center (BIC) www.sba.gov/ct/ctbic1.html

Business Information Center (BIC) provides general information about franchising and/or to verify a franchise company's IFA membership status. The BIC has a guide to buying a franchise. They have information on franchise laws for franchisor or franchisee. They also have a book called "The Franchise Bible".

Dept of Banking Securities and Investment Division www.state.ct.us/dob/pages/busopfaq.html

Department of Banking Securities and Investment Division regulate business opportunities in Connecticut. Business Opportunity programs can include vending machine routes, distributorships, franchises and multi-level marketing arrangements. A list of registered business opportunities, including federally registered trademarks or service marks, is available on the Department of Banking Web site. Business Opportunities must register with the Department of Banking. Registration includes the filing of a completed application, payment of a monetary fee, a disclosure statement, financial documents, and any contracts and promotional materials. Franchises that have a federally registered trademark do not register with the Department of Banking. The burden of proving that a trademark or service mark continues to be federally registered rests with the business opportunity seller.



Also Consider

In addition to looking at loan options think about increasing your sales by doing business with federal, state and local governments. The proposal process for open bids can be time consuming and may require you to be pre-certified before you submit your bid. Each has their own requirements and jobs can cover a variety of industries. You can find open bids by doing a search online or trying these sites:

- Small Business Administration www.sba.gov – Review the online training course regarding doing business with the government.
- State of Connecticut - Doing Business with the State of Connecticut www.ct.gov/ctportal/taxonomy/ct_taxonomy.asp?DLN=27187&ctportalNav=|27187|&ctportalPNavCtr=|27193|#27193
- Visit City sites to see how they handle their procurement process.
- www.bidsync.com – provides bid information for over 1,000s of bid and requests for proposals (RFPs) that are posted across the web. To get access to many of the bids you do have to pay a membership fee but if you win a bid it can be worthwhile.

You can also search freelance jobs online and see if you can find jobs to increase your business. A few sites to look at include:

- www.odesk.com
- www.elance.com
- www.ifreelance.com
- www.guru.com

These sites list jobs in categories and usual require you to prepare a proposal or a bid for each job. Make sure you don't underestimate your skills and talents just to get a job. Since these are listed on the web you may be bidding against individuals who have a lower cost of living and is able to bid unbelievably low amounts. Know your worth! Also know the amount you will pay to utilize the service.

About the Author: Kimberly Gaskins is the Founder and President of K. Gaskins Consulting. We work with small business owners and non-profit organizations in preparing strategic and operational plans which cultivate profits, productivity and prosperity. Visit our website at www.kgaskinsconsulting.com to learn more about our upcoming workshops, seminars and customized services.

