



# Strengthening Durham's Small Business Ecosystem

**April 7, 2025**

County Commissioners





# Roots & History of Impact

# Forward Cities | Our Why

- **We believe** every entrepreneur deserves an equitable opportunity to launch, grow, and sustain a business that creates wealth for themselves, their chosen family, and their local community.
- **We understand** that building densely connected and authentically collaborative support networks is the most effective way to accomplish this.
- **We desire** to leverage our national expertise, learnings, and connections for local impact
- **We hope** our collective work will position and uplift Durham County as a model for equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems across the country, spurring sustainable local, regional, and national investment for the work and your organizations.



# Community Navigator



U.S. Small Business  
Administration



## 2022-2023 \$1M Investment Secured to Empower Durham Entrepreneurs & Support Organizations

- Forward Cities secured the only city-level grant in NC
- Was designed to help entrepreneurs within the region to equitably start, grow, and scale businesses
- Sought to address inequities in access to information and resources

# E3 Durham | Our Program Team

**90% Individuals of color**  
**70% Black**, 10% Hispanic,  
10% Middle-Eastern/African, 10% White



**FAY HORWITT**  
Chief Program  
Officer



**MAGALIE YACINTE**  
Senior Director, Programs



**JACINTA WALKER**  
Program Director



**LATOYA ALSTON**  
PT Business Navigator



**SANTIAGO RAMOS**  
Bilingual Business Navigator



**NUTISHIA LEE**  
Director of Marketing



**E.A. GREEN**  
Media Consultant



**KASEM MOHSEN**  
Finance



**STACEY WILLIAMS**  
Research Consultant



**ASHLEY DAY**  
Program Coordinator



# E3 Durham Today

# Program Overview

- **Community-Centered Support:** E3 Durham provides wrap-around services for businesses and entrepreneurs at all stages.
- **Navigation & Alignment:** One-on-one guidance connects entrepreneurs to ecosystem partners for better support.
- **Earn & Grow:** Entrepreneurs earn credits redeemable for services and products to scale their business.



# Program Tracks & Goals

## Track 1

### Small Business Support

1. **Learn-to-Earn** | Incentivize entrepreneurial education and connection
2. **Cohort Programs** | Leverage cohort accelerators to address gaps identified by entrepreneurs
3. **Revenue Growth** | Expand support for capital access, certifications and procurement



## Track 2:

### Ecosystem Development

1. **Collaboration** | Enhance trusted relationships between service providers
2. **Strategy** | Collectively design and activate a sustainable Ecosystem Strategic Plan
3. **Hub** | Activate a vibrant physical and online hub for the ecosystem





**Track 1**

# **Small Business Support**

Meeting Existing & Emerging Entrepreneurs Where They Are

# Learn-to-Earn



# HOW IT WORKS...



1

DREAM

The entrepreneur tell us about themselves, their business/idea, and their vision for success in-person or at the new E3 Durham Center.



# HOW IT WORKS...



2

EXPLORE

The entrepreneur connects with a business Navigator, explores ecosystem resources, and receives ongoing support through monthly check-ins.



# HOW IT WORKS...



**3**

**LEARN**

The entrepreneur gets referred to opportunities, support, and services based on their unique needs and objectives.



# HOW IT WORKS...



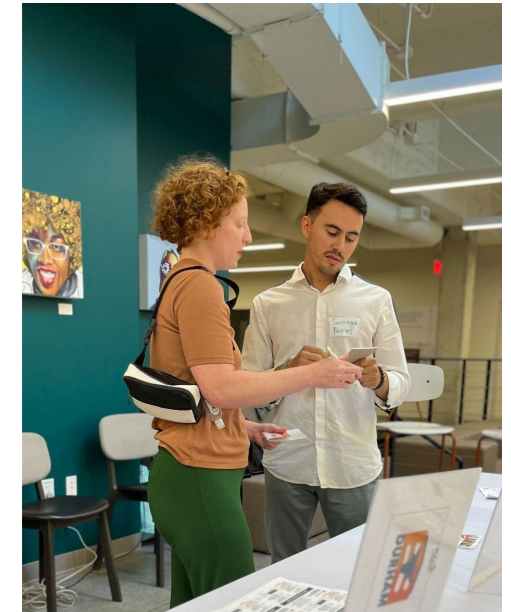
**4**

**EARN**

**NEW!**

The entrepreneur earns credit hours for:

- meeting with their navigator
- meeting with free business counselors
- attending monthly E3D events
- participating in cohort programs



# HOW IT WORKS...



**5**

**REDEEM**

**NEW!**

The entrepreneur can accumulate credit hours and redeem them for needed professional service packages and products including:

- business planning
- branding/marketing
- graphic/web design
- social media plans
- accounting services
- tax services
- legal services
- software
- coworking passes

# HOW IT WORKS...



## CONNECT

Throughout their journey, the entrepreneur has the opportunity to connect with their peers, service providers, and valuable resources to help them grow and scale.





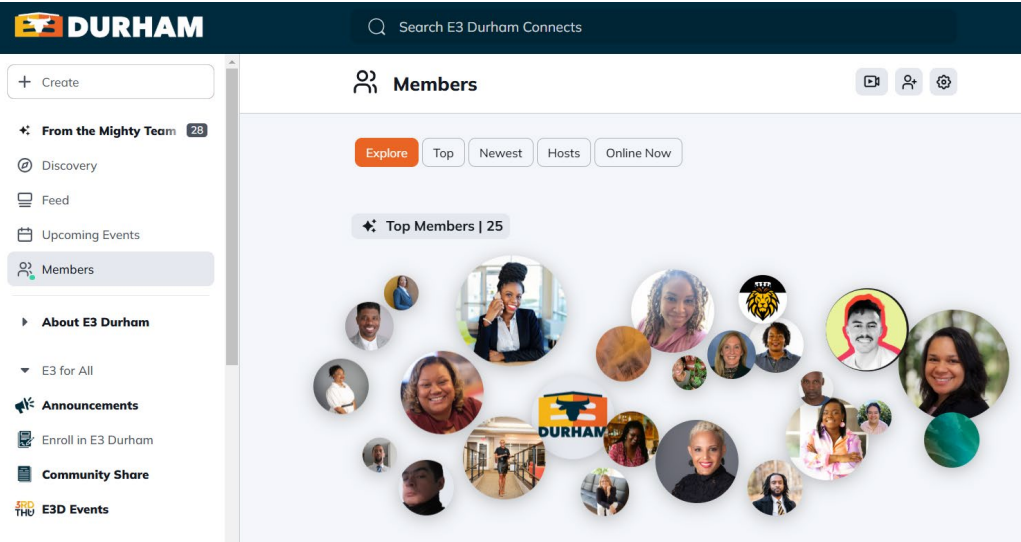
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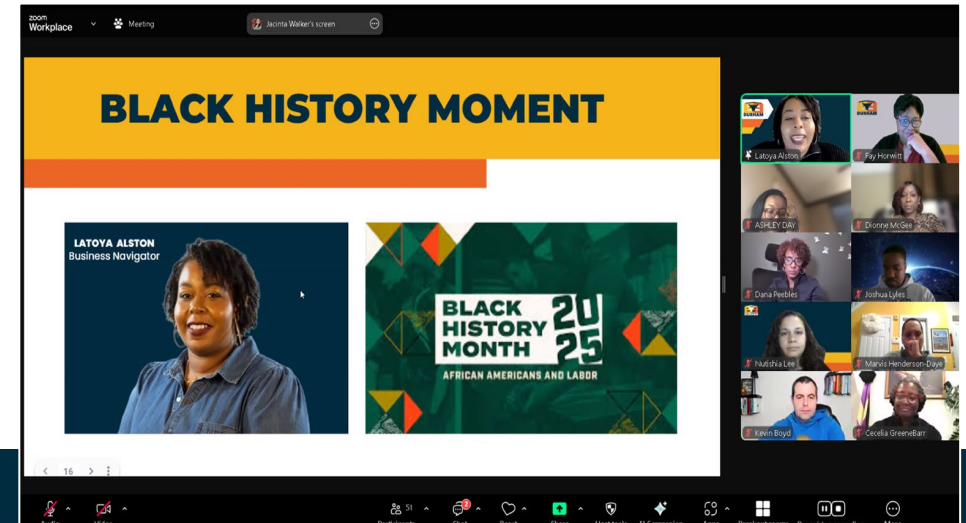
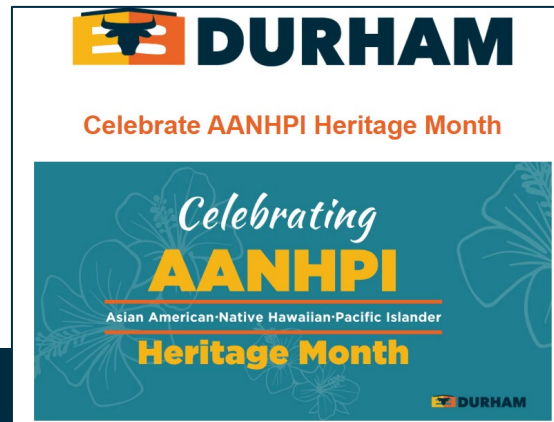
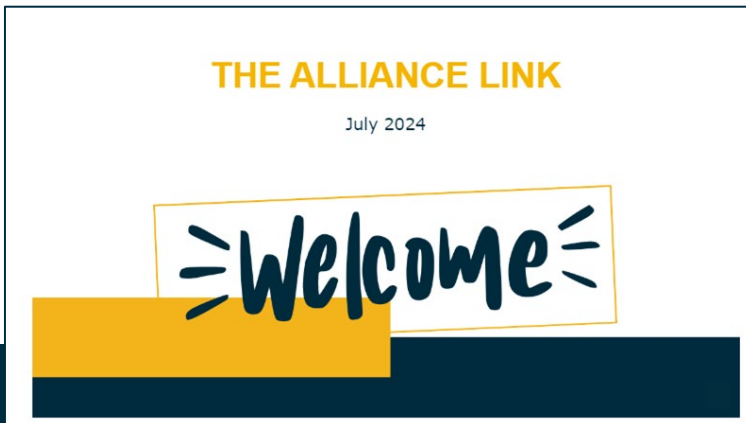
S L  N G S H O T



# Digital Ecosystem Hub

## Activating Community

- E3D Connects
- Monthly E3D Newsletter
- Monthly E3 Exclusive for clients
- Translation Services
- Business Directory
- Resource Directory
- Service Provider Mixer



# Cohort Programs



Funded by:  
**NCIDEA™**

OPERATION HOPE DURHAM

**DEVELOPING YOUR MILLION DOLLAR IDEA - COHORT Q&A**

Hosted by Operation HOPE & E3 Durham

January 21, 2025 at 6PM

The poster features a dark blue background with a white and orange graphic at the bottom left. It includes a small photo of a smiling woman on the left and logos for Operation Hope and E3 Durham at the top right.

## LevTech Accelerator

A cohort program designed to train, equip, and provide limited professional service implementation for existing small businesses seeking to leverage technology to improve, grow, and/or scale their business.

# Technical Assistance & Connections



**LIVE STREAM**

## SERVICE PROVIDER MEET & GREET

Hosted by Jacinta Walker,  
E3 Durham Program Director

**Fridays at 12 PM**



# Partnership

- Bi-Weekly collaboration meetings
- Program cross-promotion
- Entrepreneur referrals
- Cohort program co-development



ARPA  
Partner  
Organization

KNOX  
ST. STUDIOS



# By the Numbers

Year 1 - to Date

**35%**  
increase in  
LinkedIn  
followers

**12K+**  
e-newsletters  
delivered

**153**  
hours of  
navigation &  
counseling

**240**  
active  
clients

**669**  
L2E Credits  
Earned

**16**  
cohort program  
participants

**415+**  
event attendance

**18**  
workshop  
hours

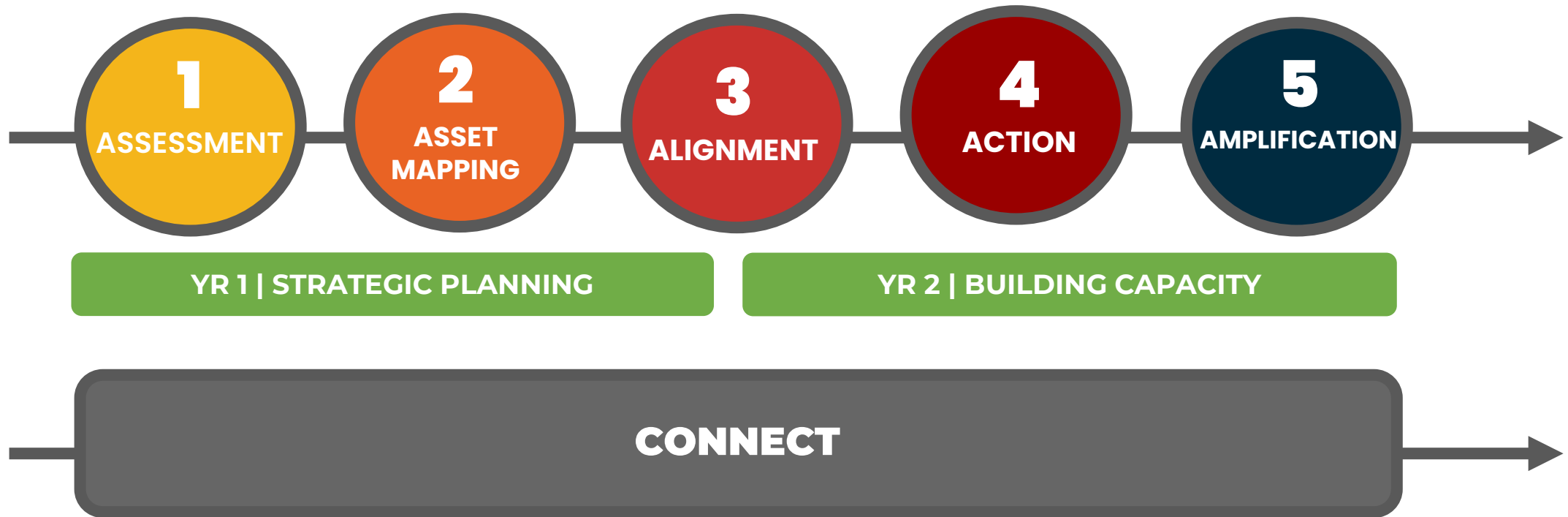


**Track 2**

# **Ecosystem Development**

**Linking & Leveraging Insights & Resources**

# ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT





# E3 Alliance | Coming in Year 2

- Serve as champions for the local entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Meets monthly
- Building relationships
- Mapping resources and identifying strengths/gaps
- Co-development of ecosystem strategic plan



# Final Strategic Report

## Bringing it All Together

In March 2026, a **final strategic report** will be developed to provide a blueprint for sustaining and expanding the progress made during this two-year initiative. This report will include:

- Impact, key achievements and lessons learned
- Long-term strategy for strengthening Durham's entrepreneurial ecosystem through 2030.
- Specific recommendations for policy, funding, leadership, and programming to sustain ecosystem gains.
- Budget framework to guide investment in entrepreneurship support beyond the ARPA funding period.





## **The Vision:**

Our innovative Small Business Ecosystem will position Durham as city where entrepreneurs come to thrive - becoming an aspirational small business development model for communities around the country.



# Strengthening Durham's Small Business Ecosystem

Thank You!

