

Women's Center for Entrepreneurship Celebrates Pride Month with Programs and Critical Resources for LGBTQ Entrepreneurs

WCEC Women's Business Center Provides Business Counseling, Technical Assistance and Access to Capital for Women, BIPOC and LGBTQ Small Business Owners

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The Women's Center for

Entrepreneurship is recognizing the

accomplishments of LGBTQ entrepreneurs by celebrating Pride Month and providing the critical tools and resources necessary to help them succeed. The WCEC Women's Business Center has made it its mission to support small businesses representing underserved communities, serving as a SBA Resource Partner and designated Community Navigator spoke organization. As a

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Rana Shanawani

[According to the Small Business Administration](#) and the

National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, there are 1.4 million LGBTQ+-owned businesses across the United States that generate an estimated \$1.7 trillion in economic impact for the US economy and create thousands of jobs each year. In a statement highlighting the Pride Month celebrations, SBA Administrator Isabella Casillas Guzman noted the important contributions the LGBTQ+ community makes to a thriving US economy, despite the social and economic barriers these underrepresented entrepreneurs face.

WCEC Executive Director Rana Shanawani believes LGBTQ small business owners represent a growing and dynamic sector that needs increased support. “We are connecting micro-



entrepreneurs with the critical resources they need to grow and thrive. Diversity, equity and inclusion is not only one of our core principles, it is just good business for diverse groups to have a seat at the table.”

The WCEC has offered special programs throughout the month of June to honor Pride month, including Gender Identity & Expression in the Workplace and [LGBTQ+ Pride Month: Grants and Loans](#). The Grants and Loans webinar featured special guests from [New Jersey Pride Chamber of Commerce](#): Andrea Garcia, NJPCC Board Director & VP of Marketing, Founder & CEO of COMMS/NATION LLC and Stephanie Lokker, NJPCC Board Director & VP of Supplier Diversity and Certification, Founder & CEO of Lockerbie & Co.

The New Jersey Pride Chamber of Commerce shared networking resources and helpful tips on how to become a certified LGBTBE business to secure corporate, supplier diversity and government contracts and gain access to other procurement opportunities. The WCEC team discussed current programs that spotlight grants, micro-loans and other funding options to help LGBTQ+-owned small businesses gain access to capital and increase growth.

About Women’s Center for Entrepreneurship

□The Women’s Center for Entrepreneurship (WCEC) is a registered 501c3 nonprofit. As a Small Business Administration Resource Partner, Community Navigator and Women’s Business Center, the WCEC’s mission is to help small businesses succeed. The WCEC Women’s Business Center works with women and minority-owned businesses from the start up stage to existing small businesses looking to scale up by providing educational resources, business counseling, career training, technical assistance and COVID-19 relief loan and grant assistance. The WCEC is a recipient of the SBA Resiliency and Recovery Demonstration grant and a Silver Stevie Award Winner.

For more information on WCEC, go to <https://www.wcecnj.org/>

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