



The Need:

Entrepreneurship has been a route to prosperity and success for immigrants across the United States and in Minnesota since the first settlers arrived escaping poverty, war, famine, and political and religious persecution. Today, small businesses continue to drive our economy and create two-thirds of new jobs nationally, from only 44 percent of economic activity (2019 SBA report). Their

job creation roles are particularly vital in immigrant communities where language and formal education barriers lock many individuals out of the wider job market.

According to a 2015 Concordia University study, over 3,000 African immigrant-owned small businesses statewide generated \$281 million in sales annually and employed thousands of immigrants. Overall, African immigrants, driven by the same challenges to migrate as earlier waves of European immigrants, earned \$2.5 billion in wages (2015 Federal Reserve) and paid at least \$200 million in state and local taxes. However, upward mobility eludes many African immigrants despite their high labor participation rates and contributions to the economy. Significant numbers continue to live in poverty at rates higher than all immigrants and almost twice the rate of all Minnesota despite employment rates like White Minnesotans.

The (A) Solution:

African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS) has created a successful vehicle for harnessing African immigrants' entrepreneurial spirit to create jobs and avenues out of poverty. AEDS provides training, 1:1 coaching, lending, and training support to help immigrant businesses launch, grow, and thrive and spur economic activity in St. Paul's Hamline-Midway neighborhood, the center of the African immigrant community. From 2015 – 2019, AEDS helped create 2,159 jobs by awarding \$767,284 in business loans that leveraged investments of over \$4.2 million. In 2020, AEDS served over 1,000 individuals and awarded more than \$3.4 Millions in grant and over \$1M in loan to African immigrants.

The Little Africa Plaza Project:

AEDS is seeking \$ 4 million dollars to provide technical assistance and financing to immigrant-owned businesses, create 30 new jobs, and activate a vacant and condemned building in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood into a tax-generating commercial asset. Located at 678 Snelling Avenue, the building was originally a 1920's era former Chevrolet dealership. After its rehabilitation, it will house immigrant-owned grocery stores, a bakery and cultural cloth to rent, a cultural museum, and AEDS staff offices. The project will help stabilize the neighborhood commercial corridor, serves the cultural food needs of immigrant population, and provides a taste of African cuisine and culture for the larger community.



Our Philosophy: Embracing Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has been a route to prosperity and success for immigrants across the United States and in Minnesota.

How We Work: Building Businesses

African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS) builds wealth within African immigrant communities through economic development activities. Our extensive cross-cultural intelligence and technical expertise allows AEDS to unleash the power of entrepreneurship within the communities we serve.