

Program Proposal: First Fridays Street Festival Series

Program Overview

The **First Fridays Street Festival Series** is a rotating monthly street festival designed to activate Oak Park's business districts on the first Friday of July, August, September, and October from 6-10p. The series will rotate across four key business districts: Chicago East, Madison, Southtown, and Pleasant, transforming each location into a vibrant community space for residents and visitors. The festival will feature live entertainment, local business participation through vendor tables, and various community-driven activities, fostering both neighborhood connections and local economic growth.

Program Goals

1. Strengthen relationships between neighborhoods and business districts, leveraging special events to enhance community engagement, economic vitality, and neighborhood cohesion.
 - **Program Contribution:**
 - The First Fridays Festival will foster relationships between Oak Park's business districts and its surrounding neighborhoods by creating a regular community gathering that encourages participation from diverse residents.
 - The event will emphasize inclusion, racial equity, and sustainability by offering accessible, family-friendly entertainment, food vendors, and opportunities for businesses to engage with attendees.
 - By rotating through different districts, the festival will build cross-neighborhood connections, stimulating interactions that bridge the diverse communities of Oak Park.
2. Support the Village's Economic Vitality Strategy by growing Oak Park's nighttime economy and strengthening local businesses.
 - **Program Contribution:**
 - The festival's nighttime scheduling will encourage residents and visitors to explore Oak Park's restaurants, retail stores, and service providers after hours, boosting local spending and enhancing the district's visibility.
 - The inclusion of vendor booths and promotional opportunities for local businesses will create direct economic benefits by attracting foot traffic and encouraging patronage.
 - With the Village's support, the festival can become a cornerstone of Oak Park's broader effort to revitalize its evening economy.

Program Structure

- **Dates:** First Fridays of July, August, September, and October
- **Locations:** Rotating across four business districts:
 - **July:** Chicago East
 - **August:** Madison
 - **September:** Southtown District
 - **October:** Pleasant
- **Activities:**
 - **Entertainment:** Each event will feature live music performances, street performers, and family-friendly activities.
 - **Vendor Participation:** Local businesses will be invited to set up tables to engage with attendees, offering special promotions and selling goods/services.
 - **Community Engagement:** The festival will incorporate community-driven activities such as interactive games, art installations, and nonprofit booths to further connect attendees with Oak Park's vibrant local culture.

Business Participation and Benefits

Local businesses within each hosting district will be integral to the success of the festival. Participation benefits include:

- **Vendor Tables:** Businesses can set up vendor booths along the street to directly engage with the public, sell products, and promote their services.
- **Increased Foot Traffic:** The festival's structure is designed to attract residents and visitors alike, providing a significant opportunity for businesses to gain exposure and drive sales.
- **Community Engagement:** The festival offers a platform for businesses to actively contribute to the local community, building goodwill and loyalty with residents.

Community Impact

The First Fridays Street Festival Series will have a long-lasting impact on Oak Park's neighborhoods and economy by:

- **Strengthening neighborhood-business relationships:** By offering a recurring event that moves between districts, the festival will serve as a bridge between local businesses and the neighborhoods they serve, enhancing community relationships.

- **Enhancing the local economy:** The nighttime economy will benefit from increased foot traffic and extended hours for local businesses, encouraging spending and stimulating growth.
- **Promoting inclusivity and diversity:** The festival will be an accessible, family-friendly event, offering a diverse range of activities that celebrate Oak Park's values of equity and community connection.

Budget Overview

A budget will be required to support key aspects of the event, including: The budget includes costs for entertainment, event marketing and promotion, and the rental of tables and chairs to accommodate participating businesses. We are requesting the Village's support in waiving street closure fees, in addition to providing 75% of the cost to do these events. Which will further ensure the success of the event and minimize the financial burden on the Chamber of Commerce.

Item	Estimated Cost per Event	Total (for 4 events)
Start-up Costs	\$5,000 (One time expense)	\$5,000
Entertainment	\$5,000	\$20,000
Event Marketing/Promotion	\$2,000	\$8,000
Tables and Chairs	\$2,500	\$10,000
Traffic Control Costs	All costs to be covered by the Village.	0
Public Safety Costs	All costs to be covered by the Village.	0
Total		\$43,000
Chamber Commitment		\$10,750
Village Commitment		\$32,250 plus all traffic and public safety costs

Conclusion

The First Fridays Street Festival Series aligns with Oak Park's broader goals of creating vibrant, diverse, and connected neighborhoods while strategically fostering economic vitality. With the Village's support, this initiative will become a signature series of community events, reinforcing Oak Park's reputation as a thriving, inclusive, and culturally rich community.

Program Proposal: Oak Park Black & Latine Business Support Network

Program Overview:

The Oak Park Black & Latine Business Support Network is designed to create a robust support system for Black and Latine-owned businesses, using a two-track cohort model that targets both new/emerging and established businesses. Grounded in the theories of *Community of Practice* (Wenger, 1998), *Adult Learning Theory* (Knowles, 1984), and *Inclusive Economic Development*, the program creates a dynamic learning and networking environment that fosters sustainable business growth, belonging, and professional development.

Program Goals

Primary Goals

1. Support and Retain Black & Latine Businesses

This goal focuses on providing targeted educational and networking opportunities to address the unique challenges Black and Latine-owned businesses face, ultimately helping them succeed and remain in Oak Park.

- *Theory Applied: Community of Practice* – This approach views business owners as learners who benefit from shared experience. By forming a community of Black and Latine business owners, participants can support each other and learn collaboratively.
- *Application:* The cohort structure and shared sessions foster collaboration, mutual problem-solving, and exchange of knowledge between participants, allowing them to learn from both experts and peers.
- **Measured by:** Business license renewals and qualitative feedback about progress in business operations and growth.

2. Foster a Sense of Belonging Within the Business Community

A key challenge for minority-owned businesses is often a sense of exclusion from the broader business community. The program is designed to create a welcoming and inclusive environment.

- *Theory Applied: Inclusive Economic Development* – By intentionally creating spaces for Black and Latine business owners, the program supports marginalized groups and addresses the systemic challenges they face in building a business.
- *Application:* Sessions specifically address the barriers of doing business in predominantly white environments (PWE), reinforcing that Oak Park is an inclusive space. Regular networking and peer engagement help business owners build connections and feel integrated into the broader community.
- **Measured by:** Pre- and post-program surveys assessing changes in participants' sense of belonging and integration within the business ecosystem.

Secondary Goals

1. Empowering Black and Latine Professionals as Experts

Each session will be led by Black and Latine Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), offering both practical knowledge and role models for participants.

- *Theory Applied: Adult Learning Theory* – Knowles' theory emphasizes that adults bring their experiences into the learning process and learn best when they find immediate relevance in the material. Having SMEs from similar backgrounds ensures that learning resonates with participants' lived experiences.
- *Application*: Black and Latine SMEs provide culturally responsive teaching, connecting with participants through shared challenges and opportunities, and offering practical tools that can be applied immediately to business issues.
- **Measured by**: Attendance and engagement levels during sessions, along with participant feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of SMEs.

2. Position Oak Park as a Supportive Hub for Black and Latine Businesses

This goal is about building Oak Park's reputation as an open, welcoming, and resourceful community for minority-owned businesses.

- *Theory Applied: Inclusive Economic Development* – A welcoming environment isn't just about local resources; it's about actively making space for Black and Latine business owners in every aspect of the community.
- *Application*: The program includes sessions on navigating Oak Park's economic infrastructure and using local resources effectively, positioning the village as an ally to minority business owners.
- **Measured by**: Increased business presence from Black and Latine-owned companies, as tracked through local business registrations and participation.

Program Structure & Content

Program Duration: 8 months

Cohorts:

- **Track 1:** Micro & Emerging Businesses
- **Track 2:** Established Businesses

Cohort Structure (Based on *Community of Practice* and *Adult Learning Theory*):

Each cohort will have structured learning opportunities, combining practical lessons with peer engagement. The cohort model ensures that participants build a community, where learning is supported by shared experience and peer-to-peer problem solving.

Track 1: Micro & Emerging Businesses

Session Frequency: Half-day sessions, held monthly on the second Saturday.

Session Flow (Built Around *Adult Learning Theory*):

- **9:00 - 10:00 AM | *Topic Introduction & Peer Exercise*:**

The session starts with a brief introduction to the day's topic, followed by a peer activity to get participants thinking about how the topic applies to their business.

 - *Application*: Peer exercises promote experiential learning, where participants solve real problems with input from their peers. This process engages learners early and ties new material to their current business challenges.
- **10:00 - 11:00 AM | *SME Presentation*:**

Black and Latine SMEs present on key business topics, offering practical advice and insights.

 - *Application*: These presentations are designed to be highly relevant, with SMEs focusing on real-world business scenarios. This builds credibility and relatability, keeping participants engaged.
- **11:00 AM - 12:00 PM | *Work Session*:**

Participants are given the opportunity to apply new concepts in real time, using their own business as a case study. SMEs and facilitators are available to assist.

 - *Application*: Adult learners benefit from immediate application of concepts. This work session ensures that participants are not only hearing the theory but implementing it in their business plans.
- **12:00 PM - 1:00 PM | *Lunch & Networking*:**

Networking over lunch strengthens bonds within the cohort and builds the peer-to-peer support system that extends beyond the program.

 - *Application*: Networking is a key element of *Community of Practice*, encouraging shared experiences, advice exchange, and professional connections that contribute to a lasting business community.

Core Topics (Designed Around Business Fundamentals and *Inclusive Economic Development Principles*):

1. **Navigating Oak Park's Economic Vitality Infrastructure**
 - How to access village resources and collaborate with local institutions.
2. **How to Do Business in a Predominantly White Environment (PWE)**
 - Navigating cultural dynamics and leveraging unique business strengths in a PWE context.
3. **Marketing for Emerging Businesses**
 - Focus on resource-light marketing strategies that build brand presence.
4. **Human Resources**
 - Building a small, capable team and developing leadership skills.
5. **Accounting & Finance Basics**
 - Financial literacy tailored for new businesses, including managing cash flow and securing funding.
6. **Communications: Brand Storytelling**
 - How to craft an authentic, compelling business narrative.
7. **Operations: Scaling Your Business**

- Practical steps for growing and scaling, from managing inventory to expanding customer base.
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Track 2: Established Businesses

Session Frequency: Evening sessions, held monthly.

Session Flow (Based on *Community of Practice* and *Adult Learning Theory*):

- **6:00 - 6:30 PM | *Networking*:**
Informal networking opens each session, allowing established business owners to share challenges and ideas.
 - *Application:* This session creates space for peer-to-peer learning, a key tenet of *Community of Practice*, helping participants develop trusted relationships with their peers.
- **6:30 - 7:30 PM | *SME Presentation*:**
Presentations delve into advanced topics, focusing on business scaling and operational efficiencies.
 - *Application:* SMEs are selected for their experience in managing larger, more complex businesses, providing participants with real-world insights on scaling and maintaining sustainable growth.
- **7:30 - 8:00 PM | *Networking*:**
Closing with another networking session reinforces the learning and encourages participants to continue sharing resources and ideas outside the formal sessions.

Core Topics:

1. **Navigating Oak Park's Economic Vitality Infrastructure**
 - Advanced insights into how to engage with village government and local institutions for business growth.
 2. **Getting Your Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Certification**
 - The process and benefits of becoming a certified MBE.
 3. **Advanced Marketing Strategies**
 - Exploring new platforms and approaches to expand brand reach.
 4. **Human Resources: Talent Retention & Leadership**
 - Strategies for retaining top talent and fostering a strong workplace culture.
 5. **Financial Planning for Growth**
 - Advanced financial management, including securing capital for expansion.
 6. **Communications: Managing Business Reputation**
 - Strategies for maintaining and enhancing a business's public image.
 7. **Operations: Scaling & Expanding Your Business**
 - How to scale operations, increase efficiency, and enter new markets.
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Evaluation & Measurement

Quantitative Metrics:

1. **Business License Renewals:** Tracking renewals to assess the program's impact on business retention.
2. **Event Participation:** Attendance records, cohort completion rates, and engagement levels.
3. **Belonging Survey:** Pre- and post-program surveys to measure shifts in participants' sense of belonging and community integration.

Qualitative Metrics:

1. **SME Feedback:** Participant evaluations of SME effectiveness, relevance, and delivery.
2. **Participant Success Stories:** Regularly capturing and sharing success stories to highlight program impact and best practices.

Budget:

Category	Description	Estimated Cost
Program Development	Initial development of curriculum and materials, including SME recruitment	\$5,000
Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)	Compensation for Black and Latine SMEs (8 sessions per cohort, 2 hours per session)	\$8,000
Program Coordinator	Part-time coordinator to manage the program logistics, communication, and participant support	\$25,000
Marketing & Outreach	Promotion of the program through digital ads, social media, print materials, and local newspapers	\$5,000
Venue Rental	Renting space for monthly sessions (assumes \$500 per session for 16 sessions)	\$4,000
Food & Beverage	Catering for each session (lunch for Micro & Emerging cohort, light refreshments for Established cohort)	\$8,000
Participant Materials	Workbooks, training materials, and other resources for participants	\$2,000
Technology & AV Equipment	Costs for presentation equipment, online communication platforms, and technical support	\$2,500

Networking Events	Additional networking mixers or end-of-program celebration (venue, catering, promotion)	\$5,000
Program Evaluation	Surveys, data analysis, and reporting on the program's impact	\$2,000
Miscellaneous	Unexpected costs or contingencies	\$2,500
Total Estimated Cost		\$69,000
Chamber Commitment		\$0
Village Commitment		\$69,000

Conclusion

The Oak Park Black & Latine Business Support Network leverages best practices in community-building, adult education, and inclusive economic development to support the growth and retention of minority-owned businesses. By using a cohort model, led by relatable SMEs, the program builds a vibrant *Community of Practice* that fosters both immediate business growth and long-term professional networks.