



FCS



Friends of Refugees



Start:ME 2025 Program Application

Applications open through October 5th, 2024

Start:ME is a free program that provides entrepreneurs the tools and connections necessary to build and grow successful businesses.

We serve small business owners in four metro Atlanta communities - [Clarkston](#), [East Lake area](#), [Westside/Northwest Atlanta](#), and [Atlanta's Southside](#).

Please only apply to one program and be sure to explain your tie to that community – for example, living in, working in, and/or providing a needed product or service to residents.

We encourage you to be as detailed as possible with your responses. We receive many applications and select 16-18 businesses per community.

For more information, please review a PDF of the application and [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

We look forward to learning about your business!

Your Contact Information

What is your name?

First _____

Last _____

What is your phone number? _____

What is your preferred email address? _____

What is your home address?

Street _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Which program are you applying to?

- Clarkston ([Learn More](#))
- East Lake area ([Learn More](#))
- Westside/Northwest Atlanta ([Learn More](#))
- Southside Atlanta ([Learn More](#))

Your Application

[only if applying to Clarkston program]

Which of the following describe your connection to Clarkston? (Check all that apply)

Please note that the target neighborhoods include Clarkston and surrounding communities, including, Avondale, Scottsdale, Stone Mountain, and Tucker.

- I live in or near Clarkston
- I grew up in or near Clarkston
- I work in or near Clarkston
- I operate/plan to operate my business in or near Clarkston
- I employ/plan to employ people from Clarkston
- My business provides/will provide valuable products/services to the residents of Clarkston
- My child attends an area school or early learning center (please share which one)
- I work at an area school or early learning center (please share which one)
- I attend a school in or near Clarkston (please share which one)
- I attend a local faith institution (please share which one)
- I am/was part of a Friends of Refugees program - Embrace, Jolly Avenue Community Garden, Parwana, Refugee Family Literacy, or Youth Programs
- I have no direct ties to Clarkston

How many years have you been a resident of Clarkston? _____

Start:ME Clarkston is delivered on Wednesday evenings from January through April, plus two Saturday mornings. Entrepreneurs will be expected to watch prerecorded materials before the sessions begin and complete accompanying session assignments.

Are you committed to attending and participating in sessions?

- Yes
- No

[only if applying to East Lake program]

Which of the following describe your connection to the East Lake area? (Check all that apply).

Please note that the target neighborhoods include: East Lake, Edgewood, and Kirkwood.

- I live in or near East Lake
- I live in the Villages of East Lake
- I grew up in or near East Lake
- I work in or near East Lake
- I operate/plan to operate my business in or near East Lake
- I employ/plan to employ people from in or near East Lake
- My business provides/will provide valuable products/services to residents of the East Lake area
- My child attends Drew Charter School (Elementary or Junior and Senior Academy)
- My child attends Toomer Elementary School
- My child attends Whitefoord Early Learning Academy or Child Development Program
- My child attends another area school or early learning center (please share which one)
- I work at an area school or early learning center (please share which one)
- I attend a local faith institution (please share which one)
- I have no direct ties to the East Lake area

How many years have you been a resident of the East Lake area? _____

Start:ME East Lake is delivered on Tuesday evenings from January through April, plus two Saturday mornings. Entrepreneurs will be expected to watch prerecorded materials before the sessions begin and complete accompanying session assignments.

Are you committed to attending and participating in sessions?

- Yes
- No

[only if applying to Northwest program]

Which of the following describe your connection to the Westside or Northwest of Atlanta? (Check all that apply).

Target neighborhoods include: Center Hill, Dixie Hills, Grove Park, Harvel Homes Community, Penelope Neighbors, and West Lake

- I live in the area
- I grew up in the area
- I work in the area
- I operate/plan to operate my business in the area
- I employ/plan to employ people from in the area
- My business provides/will provide valuable products/services to residents of the area
- I am a member of a neighborhood association in the area (please share which one)
- I am a member of the Northwest Business Association
- My child attends an area school or early learning center (please share which one)
- I work at an area school or early learning center (please share which one)
- I attend a local faith institution (please share which one)
- I have no direct ties to Westside/Northwest Atlanta

How many years have you been a resident of the Westside/Northwest Atlanta? _____

Start:ME Northwest is delivered on Wednesday evenings from January through April, plus two Saturday mornings. Entrepreneurs will be expected to watch prerecorded materials before the sessions begin and complete accompanying session assignments.

Are you committed to attending and participating in sessions?

- Yes
- No

[only if applying to Southside program]

Which of the following describe your connection to Atlanta's Southside? (Check all that apply).

Target neighborhoods are south of I-20, from Fort McPherson to Thomasville Heights, Pittsburgh to Browns Mill Park. These neighborhoods mostly (but not entirely) are within the Carver High School feeder pattern.

- I live in a target Southside Atlanta neighborhood
- I grew up in or near Southside Atlanta
- I work in a target Southside Atlanta neighborhood
- I operate/plan to operate my business in a target Southside Atlanta neighborhood
- I employ/plan to employ people from a target Southside Atlanta neighborhood

- My business provides/will provide valuable products/services to residents of a target Southside Atlanta neighborhood
- My child attends a Purpose Built Schools Atlanta school - Slater Elementary, Price Middle, and/or Carver STEAM Academy
- My child attends another area school or early learning center (please share which one)
- I work for Purpose Built Schools Atlanta
- I work at another area school or early learning center (please share which one)
- I attend a school in a target Southside Atlanta neighborhood (please share which one)
- I live in an FCS/Charis property
- I attend a local faith institution (please share which one)
- I have no direct ties to a target Southside Atlanta neighborhood

How many years have you been a resident of Southside Atlanta? _____

Start:ME Southside is delivered on Thursday evenings from January through April, plus two Saturday mornings. Entrepreneurs will be expected to watch prerecorded materials before the sessions begin and complete accompanying session assignments.

Are you committed to attending and participating in sessions?

- Yes
- No

The Start:ME program is taught in English. Can you read, write, and speak effectively in English?

- Yes
- No

Did you apply to Start:ME in the past?

- Yes
- No

[if yes]

Which year(s) did you apply (select all that apply):

- 2024
- 2023
- 2022
- 2021
- 2020
- Other _____

Your Business

What is the name of your business? _____

When did you first start working on your business?

Is your business currently in operation?

- Yes
- No

What's your primary business goal at this time?

- Planning your business - not actively operating. Determining if your business idea is viable and making a plan to turn it into a business
- Launching your business - turning your business idea into a reality. Registering, filing, and starting to actively operate
- Managing your business - mastering day-to-day operations, such as finances, marketing, and employee hiring
- Growing your business - expanding, seeking additional funding, and/or opening new locations
- Relaunching/reinventing your business

Do you have any business partners (in addition to yourself)?

- Yes
- No

[if yes]

What is your business partner's contact information?

- First Name _____
- Last Name _____
- Phone _____
- Email _____

Which industry most closely describes your business (select one)?

- Agriculture
- Arts/Culture/Creative
- Clothing/Accessories
- Education/Tutoring Services
- Food/Beverage
- Health/Beauty/Fitness
- Healthcare/Social Assistance
- Home Improvement
- Manufacturing
- Professional Services
- Retail
- Transportation

(Optional) Which of the following platforms does your business currently use?

- Etsy _____
- Facebook _____
- Instagram _____
- LinkedIn _____
- TikTok _____
- Website _____
- Other _____

What is the legal structure of your business?

- Not Incorporated
- Incorporated as Benefit Corporation
- Incorporated as C Corp
- Incorporated as LLC
- Incorporated as Nonprofit
- Incorporated as S Corp
- Other _____

Have you already sold any products or services?

- Yes
- No

[if yes]

This year (2024), what are your total sales? _____

In an average week, how many hours do you work on your business? _____

Are you currently employed (full-time, part-time, freelance, and/or contractor) by another company?

- Yes
- No

[if yes]

What is the name of your current employer? _____

Not counting yourself, how many people do you currently contract?

Independent contractors are typically paid by the project/assignment or receive a commission, do not receive benefits, are responsible for paying their own self-employment taxes and withholdings, may provide their own equipment, and may work offsite.

- Full-Time Independent Contractors _____
- Part-Time Independent Contractors _____

Not counting yourself, how many people do you currently employ?

Employees are typically paid a salary or wages (hourly, weekly, monthly), may receive benefits, taxes and other withholdings are deducted from paychecks, and they receive the equipment to do their work from their employer.

- Full-Time Employees _____
- Part-Time Employees _____

Do you have a "brick and mortar" business location - retail store or office space outside of your home?

- Yes
- No

[if yes]

What is your business "brick and mortar" address?

- Street _____
- City _____
- State _____
- Zip _____

When did your business "brick and mortar" open?

This year (2024), did you receive financial investment (loans, equity, grants, crowdfunding, friends and family) for your business?

- Yes
- No

[if yes]

This year (2024), what types of financial investment did you receive?

- Equity investment
- Friends and family capital
- Grant capital
- SBA-backed bank loan
- Traditional bank loan
- Other

[if selected above]

This year (2024), how much financial investment did you receive from **equity** investment(s)?

This year (2024), how much financial investment did you receive from **friends and family**?

This year (2024), how much financial investment did you receive from **grant(s)**?

This year (2024), how much financial investment did you receive from an **SBA-backed loan(s)**?

This year (2024), how much financial investment did you receive from a **traditional bank loan(s)**?

This year (2024), how much **other** financial investment did you receive?

Please describe/explain **other** financial investment received.

At this time, does your business have a separate business checking or savings account?

- Yes
- No

[if no]

What is the main reason(s) for your business not having a business checking or savings account?

- Application procedures are too complex
- Did not think it would be approved
- Distrust of financial institutions
- Fees are too expensive
- No need for checking or savings account
- No or little access to bank branches
- Other _____

Is your business currently certified as any of the following diverse classifications?

- Small Business (SBE)
- Minority-Owned (MBE)
- Woman-Owned (WBE)
- Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB)
- Veteran-Owned (VBE)
- Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned (SDVET)
- LGBT-Owned Business (LGBTBE)
- HUBZone Certified
- Other _____
- None of the above

Describe Your Business

In 100 words or less, what does your business sell? How is it different than the products or services of your competition?

In 100 words or less, how would describe your ideal customer? Why are they motivated to buy your product or service?

[if applying to Clarkston]

In 100 words or less, how does your business benefit the people who live and work in Clarkston?

[if applying to East Lake]

In 100 words or less, how does your business benefit the people who live and work in the East Lake area?

[if applying to Northwest]

In 100 words or less, how does your business benefit the people who live and work in the Westside or Northwest Atlanta?

[if applying to Southside]

In 100 words or less, how does your business benefit the people who live and work in Southside Atlanta?

In 100 words or less, how do your past experiences (professional or personal) uniquely qualify you to run this business?

Have you ever started a business before?

- Yes
- No

(Optional) In 100 words or less, how would you describe the business(es) that you started previously?

Would you describe any of your family members as an entrepreneur?

- Yes
- No

Have you participated in other cohort-based entrepreneurship programs?

- Yes
- No

[if yes]

Please describe your past participation in cohort-based entrepreneurship programs, including which programs.

Start:ME focuses on business fundamentals, ensuring that participants exit with a strong actionable business plan, comfort telling their business story, good understanding of their financials, strong insight into their target customer and broader market, and a supportive network.

What are you hoping to get out of Start:ME?

(Optional) In 100 words or less, how did you come up with this business idea?

Accessibility

(Optional) What challenges might you face participating in a program that meets on weeknight evenings?

- Food insecurity
- Health concerns
- Lack of access to a computer

- Lack of access to reliable WIFI
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of comfort with online platforms
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of transportation
- Other (please describe) _____

Demographics

Start:ME collects demographic information from all entrepreneurs that apply to the program. This information is essential for securing funding so that the program can be delivered to all participants free of charge. Start:ME values inclusivity and respects your confidentiality.

Start:ME is delivered by Emory University's Goizueta Business School in partnership with local nonprofit organizations. Emory University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, gender, genetic information, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and veteran's status.

Including you, how many people live in your household? _____

In the 2023 tax year (last year), did your total household income exceed \$X?

- Yes
- No

What is your age? _____

What is your racial group (check all that apply)?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other _____

Were you born in the United States?

- Yes
- No

[if no]

What is your country of birth?

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self describe _____
- Prefer not to say

Have you ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces?

- Yes, currently or formerly served
- No

What is the highest education level that you have completed?

- Primary school
- Middle school
- Some high school
- High school degree or GED
- Technical/vocational degree
- Associate's degree (2 year)
- Bachelor's degree (4 year)
- Master's or doctoral degree

Would you like to opt-out of regularly scheduled communications from Start:ME (example - newsletters, upcoming event announcements, etc.)?

- Yes
- No

Anonymized Information Sharing: Start:ME community partners and supporters, including Friends of Refugees, East Lake Foundation, Focused Community Strategies, Grove Park Foundation, Purpose Built Schools Atlanta, Regions Foundation, and Truist Foundation may request information on the status of businesses and mentors that participated in Start:ME. By selecting "yes" below, you give us permission to share information collected in this survey with our partners.

- Yes
- No

Start:ME contacts applicants about their application and upcoming activities through email and text messaging. By submitting your application, you consent to receiving communications from our team. We do not share your information with third parties.