



MICHIGAN'S PREMIER ECONOMIC SUMMIT AND ANNUAL MEETING

Building a Stronger Small Business Ecosystem

Friday, August 7, 2026

9:00–10:00 AM

*Presented by the New Economy Initiative, a project of
the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.*



MEET THE PRESENTERS

Your Guides for Today's Session



Wafa Dinaro

Executive Director
New Economy Initiative



Fred Paul

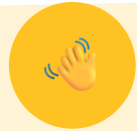
Associate Director
New Economy Initiative



Youseph Saad

Program Coordinator
New Economy Initiative

What We'll Cover



10 min Welcome + the Purpose of NEI

Wafa



10 min Encouraging Collaboration and Coordination in an Ecosystem

Fred



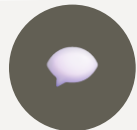
20 min Platform Overview + Live Walkthrough

Youseph



5 min What This Means for Economic Developers

Wafa



5 min Audience Q&A + Discussion

All Speakers

1

The Purpose of the New Economy Initiative

The New Economy Initiative, a special project of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, convenes the region's small business support network in an effort to help entrepreneurs move forward in launching, growing and scaling their businesses.

Our work is focused on:

Grantmaking

Grants are made to vetted business support organizations in southeast Michigan.

Convening

We convene the NEI Worktable, the Michigan Microbusiness Coalition and small business owners.

Data Collection

NEI conducts a biannual survey, along with collecting data from business support organizations.

Policy

NEI convenes around and advocates for policy changes that support microbusinesses at the state level.

Grantmaking



Mission Lenders



MichiganWomenForward



Technical Assistance Providers



Trusted Connectors



NEI IMPACT SINCE 2009



807

Grants awarded
to BSOs



\$152.3M

Total of grants awarded



46,798

Companies assisted
(March 2026)



Scan to View Our
10-Year Impact Report

1

The Purpose of the New Economy Initiative



Michigan has many strong small business resources, but entrepreneurs often struggle to know where to start.

So we create centralized resources and pathways that improve access, coordination and outcomes for small businesses. It serves as ecosystem infrastructure, both digital and in-person.

2

Encouraging Collaboration and Coordination in an Ecosystem

-  What we heard: Small businesses often face fragmented support, unclear pathways and repeating their story across multiple organizations.
-  Through the NEI Worktable, a convening of over 180 business support organizations, we aim to solve these issues for entrepreneurs.
-  Coordinated support is occurring through our MI Small Business Helper digital platform.



The Mushroom Angel Company — a Detroit small business NEI's network has helped support



MI Small Business Helper, powered by NEI and Gilbert Family Foundation, is a digital tool that gives entrepreneurs clear access to resources, programs and funding, regardless of their background.

Entrepreneurs can search for:

 Resources

 Programs

 Funding

 Technical Assistance

3

Platform Overview + Live Walkthrough

Scan to Follow Along



4

What This Means for Economic Developers



Small business support is core to economic development infrastructure.



The MEDA community can use MI Small Business Helper to find southeast Michigan and statewide resources.



Help us spread the word about this digital tool and upload your own statewide or regional resources to our digital library.

AUDIENCE Q&A + DISCUSSION
Let's Hear From You

Connect With Us on LinkedIn!



Wafa Dinaro

Executive Director

New Economy Initiative



Fred Paul

Associate Director

New Economy Initiative



Youseph Saad

Program Coordinator

New Economy Initiative



NEI is a special project of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.
neweconomyinitiative.org