

*City of Taunton  
Office of the Mayor*



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**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
ASSISTS SMALL BUSINESSES THROUGH GRANT PROGRAM**

Taunton, MA...Today Mayor O'Connell announced 19 small businesses in Taunton received assistance through a newly-created STEP UP grant program.

In February 2021, the City of Taunton was awarded a \$65,000 state grant to pilot a new program. The Sales Technology & Efficiency Professional Upgrade Program (STEP UP), a new program designed in-house by the Mayor's Office of Economic and Community Development (OECD), offered small businesses owned by women, minorities, and veterans in Taunton the chance to receive an upgraded point-of-sale (POS) system, a new or redesigned website, and social media coaching sessions.

Mayor O'Connell credits Bill Roth, Director of OECD, and TJ Torres, Grant Coordinator, with creating this resourceful pilot program. "Bill and TJ are always on the lookout for ways to help develop our city. They know small businesses are the backbone of our community and when they saw a need, they found a way to secure funding for this program. The Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) is featuring our program in an upcoming article as an innovative and creative use of grant funding."

The program was well received, with over 35 applications submitted from small businesses seeking assistance. In the end, the City was able to fund new, digital POS systems for 10 businesses, new websites for 14 businesses, and social media coaching for 11 businesses. These key upgrades have a dual purpose, aiming to mitigate the challenges caused by Covid-19 in the short term while also providing long term sustainable improvements to business operations.

"Any time our small businesses prosper, our entire city benefits. We are exploring additional funding options to expand the program to additional businesses in Taunton. We are excited to offer this great new program more widely to our business community," said Mayor O'Connell.

The following businesses received STEP UP grants: All Star Cheer Bowtique, Brighter Daze Hair Salon, Broadway Barbershop, Distinguished Details, Eastern Music, Energy No Limit, Key to Beauty, M&A Supplier Diversity Consultants, Michael Anthony's, Mirror Mirror Boutique, Open Doors Yoga, Shear Expressions, Silver City Dance Studio, Stephanie's, Story Tree, Taunton Thrift, Tex Barry's, Tux Towne, and U.B.U. Hair Salon. ###