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The California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA) supports economic growth and innovation statewide. CalOSBA's core mission is to provide resources to all California small businesses, disabled veteran business enterprises (SB/DVBEs), minority and women-owned businesses, and those individuals who own and operate businesses located in low-wealth, rural and disaster-impacted communities.

CalOSBA supports outreach and engagement efforts through advocacy, sharing resources, and building resilience through programs and our Technical Assistance Network that supports growth and business sustainability.

This month's newsletter highlights the ecosystem and CalOSBA's efforts to serve California businesses statewide.

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[From the Advocate](#)



FROM THE ADVOCATE



Look Ahead at 2024

There is always something so hopeful and exciting about the possibilities that a new year brings. So, as I started to think about what I wanted to share in this first column of 2024, an overview of the comprehensive support The California Office of Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA) offers seemed like a good place to start. Immediately, I felt energized just looking at our portfolio of programs and initiatives. Many of which, I am proud to say, are directly supported by legislation passed by Governor Newsom or in partnership with other state agencies including The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz.) Even as I am writing this, the CalOSBA team has hit the ground running bringing their strong service ethos to further strengthening the CalOSBA ecosystem; growing our ranks of new and returning small businesses that benefit from our online resources and our in-person, 1 to 1 business support offered at the Small Business Technical Assistance Centers and Accelerate California Innovation Hubs.

Read the full article on LinkedIn [here](#).

[Small Business Leadership Training](#)



The Small Business Leadership Training is brought to you by Agee Global Solutions and hosted by the California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA). This event aims to increase your knowledge of CalOSBA programs and resources available for diverse stakeholders and community-based organizations and to foster growth and collaboration within the business community.

REGISTER FOR SAN DIEGO	REGISTER FOR LOS ANGELES
January 24	January 25

Register for [San Diego](#)
Wednesday, January 24 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Bayview Baptist Church
6134 Pastor Timothy J. Winters St.
San Diego, CA 92114

Register for [Los Angeles](#)
Thursday, January 25 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Westin Los Angeles

5400 W. Century Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90045

[African American Economy Summit](#)

2ND ANNUAL State of California AFRICAN AMERICAN ECONOMY SUMMIT

January 24 & 25, 2024
Welcome Reception - January 24th
Full Day Conference - January 25th

Westin Los Angeles Hotel
5400 W. Century Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Speakers (partial listing):

- Timothy Alan Simon, Esq.
Chairman, CAACC
- Mayor Deborah Robertson
City of Rialto
- Toks Omishakin
California Secretary of Transportation
- Tara Lynn Gray
Director
California Office of the Small Business Advocate
- Jahmal Miller
Chief Administrative Officer
Mercy Medical Group
- Dr. Anthony Samad
Executive Director
MDAAPEI

Join CalOSBA Director, Tara Lynn Gray, at the African American Economy Summit on January 24th & 25th in Los Angeles. Director Gray will be covering the impact on African American businesses and its effect on job growth, economic development, and business assistance efforts.

Engage in an event where empowerment extends beyond mere words, The economy summit is a confluence of substantial networking and progressive ideas. This gathering transcends the ordinary conference format - it's a nexus for catalyzing action and sparking inspiration.

More registration information [here](#).

[Regional Small Business Success Stories](#)

Check out these small business success stories, made possible by the resourcefulness of these business-owners and the support of business advisors from California's [Small Business Center Network](#). We're featuring restaurants in this edition to celebrate California Restaurant Month in January.

Northern California

Oakland-based Mother and Daughter Duo Delivers Delicious Vegan Food Across the Country



Kami and Mieko Scott, mother and daughter and also co-founders of Hella Nuts, started their plant-based journey in 2018. Their goal was to come up with vegan food offerings with nothing but all natural chemicals: no chemicals, no fillers, or soy. As a black-owned and women-owned business, Hella Nuts also aims to break common misconceptions that a vegan lifestyle isn't for people of color or that vegan food is flavorless.

When they started, the Scotts had no experience with financials. They came to the Alameda SBDC and completed the SBDC's Restaurant program. The Scotts worked hard with their advisors to develop a business plan, learn how to price, and understand their budget. Their advisors also introduced them to crucial connections in the restaurant industry who went out of their way to help with every level of their business.

Hella Nuts started gaining momentum feeding the East Bay their fresh, organic, plant-based vegan foods products at festivals and pop-ups. But as they were about to get their permit from the City of Oakland to open a physical location for their eatery, COVID-19 hit.

Having explored their vision and different lines of revenue while building their business plan and budget, the Scotts had set themselves up to be nimble so when the pandemic made their original plan impossible, they were prepared and able to improvise. The Scotts switched from their in-person plan to selling online and wholesale where they found national demand with 85 percent of customers being from out of state.

They credit the SBDC for encouraging them to build an extra \$20-30K into their budget, a cushion that kept them afloat through the COVID-19 shutdowns.

Today they operate on Martin Luther King Jr. Way in the heart of Oakland.

Hella Nuts has been featured in VegNews, Peta, San Francisco Business Times, and More!

Visit Hella Nuts [Online](#) or visit 3645 Martin Luther King Jr Way
Oakland, CA 94609

Central Valley

Fat City Brew & BBQ: A Comeback Story from Stockton



In the face of unprecedented challenges, Fat City Brew & BBQ, located on Pacific Avenue in Stockton, CA, has successfully navigated the turbulent waters of the COVID-19 pandemic, emerging stronger than ever.

Before March 2020, Don King presided over a flourishing catering business. However, the pandemic-induced shutdowns hit hard, leading to a decline in catering orders and the closure of in-person services. Don pivoted to a take-out model, but by the time he was ready to re-open, he was facing sluggish catering bookings, he owed back rent and struggled to find new staff. Eviction loomed due to the property management company's refusal of partial rent.

Seeking a lifeline, Don approached the [San Joaquin SBDC](#) in January 2022. There, the business advising staff helped him to secure a \$30,600 Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), which Don used to address both outstanding rent and employee retention.

Fast forward to today, Fat City BBQ has not only regained pre-Covid sales levels but has also extended service hours, reflecting a resilient business revival. Improved communication with the property management company signifies a more robust relationship. Despite labor market challenges, Don continues to seek staffing guidance from the San Joaquin SBDC.

Looking ahead, their future is promising. The catering segment is thriving, with confirmed bookings for events of various sizes and plans to host BBQ cook-off events in the local community to further engage and expand their customer base.

Visit Fat City BBQ's [online](#).

Southern California

New York Pizza from Los Angeles with La Rocco's Pizzeria



When Paul LaRocco and his family moved La Rocco Pizzeria to Los Angeles from Brooklyn, New York, they aimed to transport diners to 1950's Little Italy

with its thin-crust Neapolitan perfected over the years. Each pie was made on the spot, and if you stopped by, you could watch as they were hurled to the ceiling.

La Rocco's was profitable from day one, but still had trouble getting a loan to expand. They were able to connect with the [Pacific Regional Corp SBDC](#), part of the [LA SBDC network](#), and receive guidance and access to additional capital.

Business Advisors Harold C. Hart-Nibbrig and Sahar Andrade helped to fine tune their business plan, obtain an SBA Community Advantage Loan of \$150,000, and add social media to the marketing mix. Paul La Rocco also took advantage of the SBDC Guided Business Plan course.

"The business plan course was very helpful," says Paul. "I didn't know the ins and outs of how to look at a business plan — how brief it should be, how intelligible, how someone will read it and what's important to include. Each SBDC advisor is an expert in their particular field. Before I signed the lease for the new location, Business Advisor Harold C. Hart-Nibbrig took a look at it and even helped me [vet] the general contractor. The SBDC has all of these support people, and it comes with the package, so they can help from your idea all the way through to opening a business."

Visit La Rocco's Pizzeria [online](#).

[Grant Programs](#)



The following grant programs are administered by CalOSBA. Review the status of current and upcoming grant programs below.

Open Programs

The following grant programs are currently open.

- [California Small Agricultural Business Drought & Flood Relief Grant Program](#) Groups 1 and 2 are extended to February 15, 2024. Drought Group 3 is expected to open in May 2024 (Date TBD).

Closed Programs

The following grant programs are currently closed.

- [Accelerate CA Inclusive Innovation Hub](#), Round 3, San Bernardino/Inland Empire
- [State Small Business Credit Incentive \(SSBCI\) - Technical Assistance](#)

For more small business resources and information, visit calosba.ca.gov

No-cost and low-cost training is available through Technical Assistance Centers across the state. Browse the training schedule on the CalOSBA website by [clicking here](#).

[Submit a request to CalOSBA](#)



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