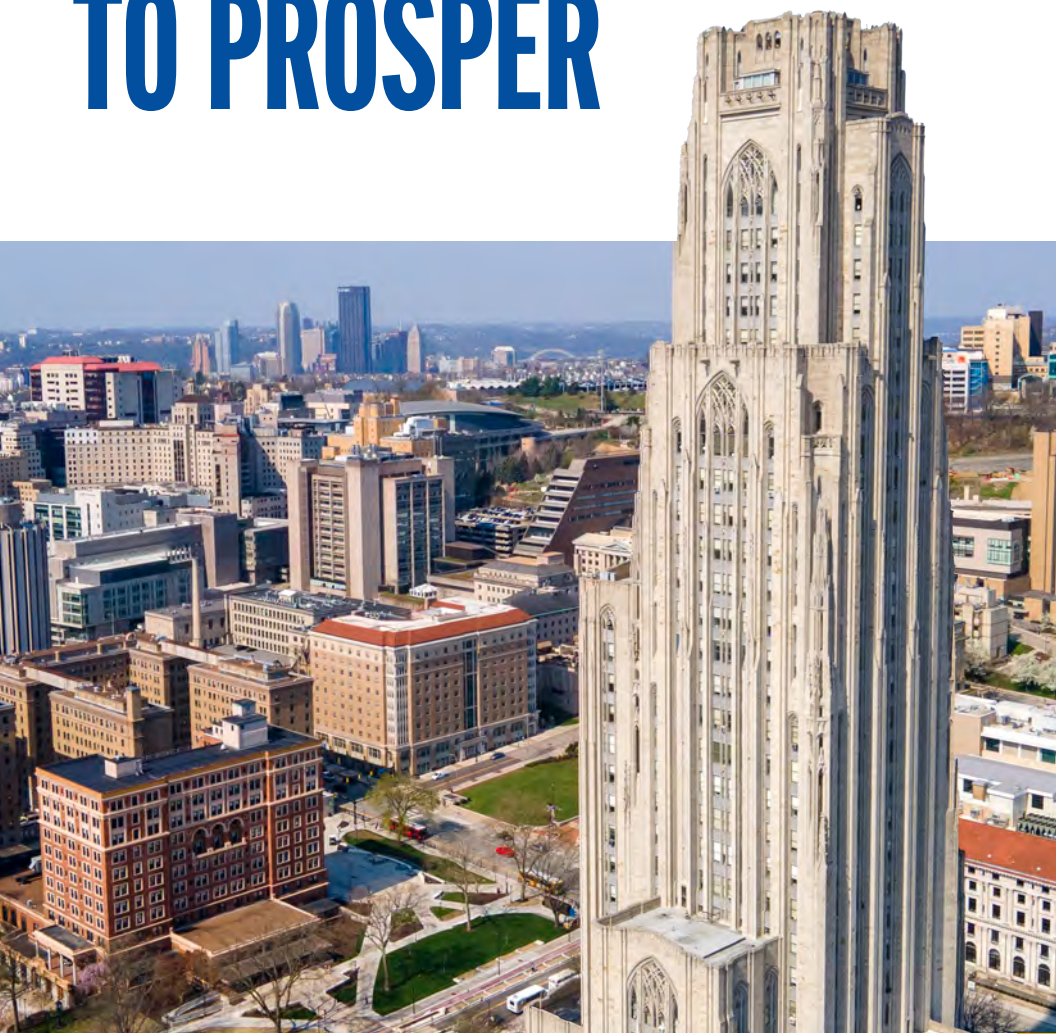


URBAN & COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM

COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER



THE INSTITUTE FOR
**ENTREPRENEURIAL
EXCELLENCE**

THE POWER TO PROSPER™



University of
Pittsburgh

The **Urban and Community Entrepreneurship Program (UCEP)**, offers a six-month education certificate to help established entrepreneurs grow their businesses and prepare for their long-term success. **Community Power to Prosper** provides participants with a community of peers while addressing the specific issues shared by small business owners.

More than 250 entrepreneurs have graduated from the **twenty-three cohorts** of Community Power to Prosper since its inception in 2012. Each cohort of the program focuses on an underserved neighborhood in the Greater Pittsburgh area.

A group of approximately 15 people, including graduates and staff, posing for a group photo. They are dressed in a variety of styles, from professional business attire to casual wear. The group is arranged in two rows, with some individuals standing and others slightly in front. The background shows an indoor setting with a staircase and modern decor.

Community Power to Prosper 2024 graduates



Community Power to Prosper program components include:

Custom Curriculum

Our curriculum provides information, tools, and resources to help participants sustain and grow their businesses. Modules are designed to ensure relevance and timeliness for our community-based entrepreneurs.

Experienced Lecturers

Faculty is carefully selected for each class, giving participants the instruction and consultation from a variety of experts. Lecturers have been chosen for their knowledge in their respective fields and their experience advising small business owners.

Graduation

All participants completing the program are awarded a certificate of academic achievement by the University of Pittsburgh during a formal graduation ceremony.



PROGRAM MODULES



**Financial Analysis, Tools,
and Resources**



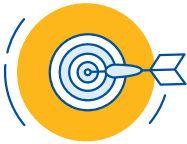
**Hiring, Training, and
Retaining Key Talent**



Legalities of Small Businesses



Social Media Management



Strategic Planning for Success



Supply Chain Management Strategies





MEET THE ALUMNI

Shanna Cochran

COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER 2024

Salon SC



Shanna Cochran's journey into the world of hairstyling began as a cherished hobby during her high school years. While working in the corporate world, she transformed her basement into a home-based salon with the help of her husband. Her business flourished through word-of-mouth, but social media truly catapulted her business into the spotlight. As her name began to circulate more widely on social channels, Shanna realized the need to expand beyond her home. In 2020, amidst the challenges of the pandemic, Shanna and her husband took a bold step by purchasing a brick-and-mortar location at a sheriff sale. This move marked the official establishment of [Salon SC](#).

In 2024 Shanna joined the Community Power to Prosper program, after being referred by a fellow graduate. The program has helped her refine her business strategies, particularly in financial management. She credits CP2P with playing a crucial role in her business acumen.

“Every topic, week-by-week, you found some great gems in it, and it would help you run your business even better than what you thought you could!”

READ MORE:

See Shanna's next business goals, plus her advice about CP2P for business owners.





Wade Lipscomb

BizFIT–COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER 2024

Triple 3 Construction

After graduating with a degree in petroleum engineering, Wade Lipscomb spent nearly the first decade of his career in the industry before transitioning into the world of construction. His journey into business ownership began with a residential construction firm aimed at buying rental properties, which served as a stepping stone for his larger aspirations.



With the encouragement from a mentor from a large commercial construction company, Wade applied to the University of Pittsburgh's Mentor-Protégé program for commercial construction. This opportunity led Wade to start [Triple 3 Construction](#) in 2021.

A pivotal part of Wade's journey was his involvement in the BizFIT–Community Power to Prosper program, facilitated in partnership with the Riverside Center for Innovation. Wade credits the program for providing valuable contacts and insights, particularly in employment law and financial statement analysis. These sessions helped him set up his company correctly, especially with the demands of dealing with general contractors who scrutinize financials, insurance, and bonding capabilities.

“The program really introduces you to the things that you need to be doing to set your company up the right way.”

READ MORE:

Learn more about how Wade got started and what Triple 3 Construction's next steps are.





Brooke Barry

COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER 2023

Brooke Barry's Home Childcare

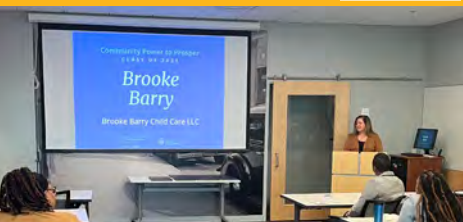


Brooke Barry's entrepreneurial journey began with a personal need that transformed into a community-driven business. As a single mom, Brooke was faced with the daunting task of finding trustworthy childcare for her newborn son. At the time, Brooke was in a well-paying union role with Duquesne Light and found a local childcare provider whose service would allow her to continue in her current career. Following an incident with her son's care, she decided to make the leap to begin operating her own home daycare in 2018, leveraging her background in elementary education from the University of Pittsburgh.

In 2023, Brooke came across a flyer for the CP2P program and applied for the program. As she now operated [Brooke Barry's Home Childcare](#), the program offered an opportunity to get a full view of the aspects of running a business. Brooke credits the program with helping her understand the many components involved in a business's success. The program offered her insights into areas of business that were not her expertise, allowing her to seek support and collaborate with fellow entrepreneurs. This experience has been instrumental in helping Brooke achieve a balanced approach to managing her business while providing the quality of care on which she has built her reputation.

READ MORE:

Learn about Brooke's range of child care services and her goal to fulfill an unmet need in the Pittsburgh region.





Curtis Brown

COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER 2024

FloorStock LLC



Through a previous business, Curtis Brown gained experience selling general merchandise on a large scale. He noticed flooring quickly stood out as a staple product that clients repeatedly sought. This demand led Curtis to establish [FloorStock](#) in 2021 to focus his efforts so that he could consistently provide quality flooring to contractors and homeowners.

Driven by his desire for business growth and refinement, Curtis joined the Community Power to Prosper program knowing the program's reputation for offering valuable tools and networking opportunities. The curriculum provided him with essential skills, particularly in bookkeeping and financial management, which have been pivotal in his business's growth.

"The [Community Power to Prosper] program...helps you hone your skills, and really refine your model if that has not been done yet. It'll help you really drill down on what your core competencies are and how you can better—or best—offer your product or service."



READ MORE:

Learn more about Curtis's business background and what has surprised him the most in entrepreneurship.





Tamara Bey

BizFIT-COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER 2024

EGR Financial Solutions

With over 20 years of experience in healthcare IT and Life Sciences, Tamara transitioned from a successful corporate career to founding [EGR Financial Solutions](#)—a company dedicated to supporting business owners.



In 2023, Tamara used corporate layoffs as the catalyst to explore entrepreneurship despite the opportunity to pursue other related roles. Encouraged by her husband and driven by her faith, she embarked on a path that aligned with her values and aspirations. EGR Financial Solutions, which stands for “Extra Grace Required,” was born from her own observations in the lending industry. Inspired by her family members’ challenges in starting their own business, Tamara committed to providing grace and support to those in need of commercial lending solutions.

Tamara’s involvement in the Community Power to Prosper program played a pivotal role in her business’s development. She attributes valuable partnerships and access to high-quality resources to the experience.

“[In CP2P], you’re going to get a team. You’re going to get introduced to great partners that can help you in your business. And then it’s also going to provide continuous learning opportunities, individually and professionally, ultimately contributing to your growth as a business owner.”



READ MORE:

See what Tamara hopes to make happen for her clients and where she sees her business going next.





Diana Byas

COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER 2022

Thick But Fit



Diana's journey into entrepreneurship was catalyzed by a personal health challenge. Faced with the prospect of going on another blood pressure medication, Diana embarked on a mission to transform her lifestyle and shed excess weight. Initially, this transformation involved using Herbalife products, but Diana soon realized that she needed a comprehensive lifestyle change that extended beyond just diet.

In pursuit of this change, Diana began visiting gyms around Pittsburgh, only to discover that the conventional fitness spaces lacked the emotional and nutritional support she sought. This motivated her to create [Thick But Fit](#), a space dedicated to supporting women with larger bodies in their journey to health and wellness. That space found a home in 2020 with the opening of her gym in East McKeesport.

Diana's advice to entrepreneurs is to invest in themselves and their businesses. After completing Community Power to Prosper, she enrolled in the IEE's Entrepreneurial Fellows Class program. Diana emphasizes the importance of programs like these, which offer essential tools and networking opportunities to support business growth. Her mother's wisdom, "a closed mouth does not get fed," has stayed with Diana, encouraging her to seek assistance as she works to achieve her business goals.



READ MORE:
Learn more about how Diana's path to better health intersected with entrepreneurship.





Imani Gray

BizFIT-COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER 2024

Gwendolyn's Construction

Following college and a career start in digital marketing, Imani Gray changed course and founded Gwendolyn's Construction in 2022. Inspired by his handyman father, Imani started the business to focus on residential construction.



The early days of [Gwendolyn's Construction](#) were characterized by education and exploration. In addition to learning from his father, Imani took advantage of the external resources available to him, beginning with support from the Pitt SBDC. He was then encouraged to enroll in Riverside Center for Innovation's BizFIT program, a business training program focused on those in the construction services industry. This decision marked a pivotal step in his entrepreneurial journey, providing him with the tools and insights necessary to succeed in the competitive worlds of residential and commercial construction.

Recognizing the need for more connections, Imani joined Community Power to Prosper, a program designed to build on the foundation laid by the first two tiers of BizFIT. Imani credits CP2P with providing benchmarks and a level-setting framework, enabling him to compare his business with similar enterprises. His advice to those considering enrollment in Community Power to Prosper is to actively participate in the classes, noting that the engagement level directly correlates with the knowledge one can gain.



READ MORE:

See what Imani plans for his business and what he's found to be his biggest hurdles.





Sharise Nance

COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER 2019

Vitamin C Healing

Handinhand Counseling Services



Sharise Nance's journey into entrepreneurship is rooted in her family's legacy of business ownership, with her grandfather, grandmother, father, and uncle each being entrepreneurs.

That inspiration drew her to the idea of running her own business, a place where she could create her own path and leave a lasting legacy.

In 2013, Sharise co-founded [Handinhand Counseling Services](#) with her college roommate and partner, Tess. The practice began as a part-time endeavor while both were working full-time jobs. Initially, Sharise had no aspirations to expand into a group practice, but as the business grew, she was able to leave her full-time job in 2017 to focus solely on her practice.

Sharise's second venture, [Vitamin C Healing](#) (named by her husband after sharing her vision with him), was created upon realizing the opportunity to establish a specialized focus and create multiple income streams. After writing her first book, she sought a subject that resonated with her experiences. Sharise found compassion fatigue, a niche area in mental health, as a critical issue impacting many in the mental health profession, leading to her second book and a series of speaking engagements.



Vitamin C Healing gained traction as Sharise connected with organizations in need of staff training on secondary trauma. By securing contracts for these essential trainings, her business began to flourish. In joining the Community Power to Prosper program, she was able to further hone her mission and clarify her target audience, enabling her to more strategically expand her reach and impact.

One of the biggest surprises Sharise encountered as a business owner was the significant time investment required to work on the business itself, beyond just providing services. From marketing and financial planning to establishing systems and processes, Sharise learned the importance of building a solid foundation to ensure long-term sustainability.

Looking ahead, Sharise aims to scale Vitamin C Healing by developing online courses for universities and organizations, allowing her to maintain a healthy cash flow without burning out. Her goal is to create systems that enable the business to thrive independently, ensuring its continued success and impact.

Sharise's advice to entrepreneurs is to invest time in working on their business and to take advantage of programs like Community Power to Prosper, which provide invaluable resources and networking opportunities. Her journey illustrates the power of perseverance, vision, and the ability to seek growth while nurturing businesses that support mental health and wellbeing.

“I know that we are busy, and things are going to come up—especially if you have a business—and life is going to happen. But this is truly an investment in growing your business. So if you're truly serious about growing your business, then this would be a good program to help you do that.”





ALUMNI NETWORK

Spanning almost two decades and with more than 200 graduates of the Community Power to Prosper program, there is a robust, motivated network of entrepreneurs with which to engage and do business. In partnership with [JPMorgan Chase](#), UCEP hosts periodic programming to connect program alumni for further education, access to resources, and business-to-business networking to strengthen our community of small business owners.





JOIN COMMUNITY POWER TO PROSPER

In addition to focusing its efforts on underserved neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, Community Power to Prosper is committed to recruiting local entrepreneurs of all backgrounds.

Admission & Requirements

Do you take pride in serving your local community?
Are you committed to sustaining and growing your business?
If so, apply to join Community Power to Prosper today!

Requirements

- In business for at least three years
- One or more full-time employee besides the business owner
- At least \$200,000 in revenue



Rhonda Carson Leach

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Nicole Hudson

Director,
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Admission

A curriculum schedule and application for the upcoming session can be found at entrepreneur.pitt.edu/cp2p



The IEE gratefully acknowledges the support of our Community Power to Prosper sponsors:



ABOUT UCEP

The IEE's **Urban and Community Entrepreneurship Program (UCEP)** specializes in helping businesses in underserved and low- to moderate-income communities grow. UCEP and its flagship educational program, Community Power to Prosper, have fostered economic empowerment in the Greater Pittsburgh area since 2008 by investing in one business, one job, and one individual at a time.

ABOUT THE IEE

The **Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence (IEE)**, part of Pitt's Office of Innovation & Entrepreneurship, has served businesses throughout Western Pennsylvania for more than 30 years. Offering a dynamic mix of consulting, education, and networking opportunities through five main centers, the IEE strives to be an innovative leader of economic development in the region.



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