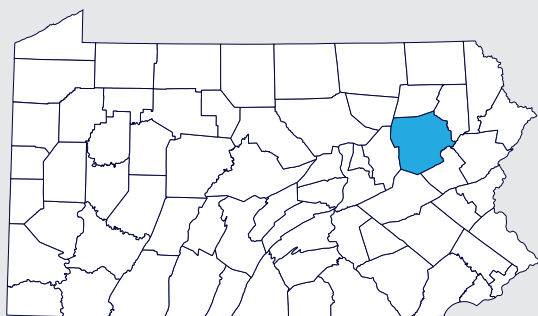


Lean Economic Development Playbook: Mini-case

MAKING RESOURCES ACCESSIBLE TO SPANISH-SPEAKING ENTREPRENEURS



Location: Hazleton, PA
Demographics¹:
 58.6% Hispanic or Latino
 37.9% White alone
 6.8% Black or African American alone
 0.2% Asian alone
 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native alone
 0.1% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone
 10.2% Two or more races

Population¹: 29,993
Median Age²: 36
Poverty Rate¹: 23.6%
Median Household Income¹: \$40,782
Median Property Value¹: \$98,600

¹ 2020 US Census – census.gov
² Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development - DCED.PA.gov

[Visit Hazleton LaunchBox](#)

BACKGROUND:

The Greater Hazleton Area is anchored by the city of Hazleton in Northeastern Pennsylvania and is the second-largest city in Luzerne County. Originally established as a center of commerce, finance, and culture thanks to the region’s rich veins of anthracite coal, the city reached its peak population of 38,000 in 1940. After World War II, the demand for coal began to decline, leaving many without work. Strip mining operations and the once-thriving garment industry began relying on cheaper labor overseas, adding to the decline in available jobs.

Today, sales, management, professional, and office occupations make up more than half of the region’s job market, and one-quarter of the workforce is employed in manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution jobs supported by the area’s industrial parks.

The city’s median household income is \$40,782—well below the state median income of \$67,587—with nearly 54% of the city population considered to be low to moderate income. More than 23% of the overall population lives in poverty. The city’s population is more than 58% Hispanic, and the poverty rate among Hispanics is 41%. Because of the relatively low median income and elevated levels of poverty, crime, and blight, the image of the city has been poor. In 2018, the city of Hazleton was designated as an [Act 47 Distressed Community](#),

lacking the tax base necessary to fund revitalization activities on its own. The following is true regarding the education statistics for the Hazleton area:

- Approximately 75% of city residents have a high school diploma or higher, which is below the 89% rate for the commonwealth.
- Thirteen percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher, which is still less than half the county and state attainment of 31%.
- Within the Hazleton Area School District, minority enrollment is 51% of the student body (majority Hispanic), more than the Pennsylvania state average of 32%.

Between 2000 and 2010, the under-18 population within the city of Hazleton grew by 30% and now comprises nearly 15% of the population—the largest age cohort. These demographics indicate that youth, and in particular Hispanic youth, will have a significant impact on the direction of the local economy.

Hazleton is geographically attractive, with its proximity to the millions of square feet of warehousing and distribution centers, and the job opportunities these companies provide. Many of Hazleton’s residents are employed in New York City and commute daily.

INITIAL OFFERINGS:

Hazleton LaunchBox opened in September 2019, approximately 3 miles from the Penn State Hazleton campus in the central part of the city. It began by providing free instruction and consultation to entrepreneurs and students.

The facility includes 4,000 square feet of coworking and

programming space as well as a prototyping makerspace.

To meet the language needs of the city's residents, the facility employs two staff members: an entrepreneurship education coordinator and a bilingual entrepreneurship facilitator. This enables all individual consultation and group programming to be offered both in English and Spanish.

WHAT WE LEARNED:

- Craft entrepreneurship (starting a business using an acquired or learned skillset: i.e., barbering, cooking, accounting) is the dominant type of entrepreneurship in underserved areas like Hazleton. Programming should be appropriately designed for this type of entrepreneur.
- Since many of our Hispanic residents commute daily to other cities, our Spanish-language programming is often held in the evenings, and our facility operating hours need to be flexible to accommodate these often-inflexible work schedules.
- We realized there was a need to design and offer programs appropriate for first-time business owners, including proper channels for obtaining business licenses and permits at the local and state levels. Many Hispanic businesses start in their homes and may be forced to close because they do not understand restrictions and regulations of running businesses out of zoned residential areas.
- Many members of the Hispanic community rely heavily on mobile phones for their internet usage. To accommodate for this, much of our virtual entrepreneurship programming utilizes livestreaming technology such as Facebook Live as an option to view these programs. Additionally, Hazleton LaunchBox provides loaner laptops for clients who may need more robust technology for applications such as online registration for business licensing and permits.
- With a high percentage of the population under the age of 18, we saw the need for entrepreneurship programs at the K-12 levels. With topics like Entrepreneurial Mindset or Starting a Business using the Business Model Canvas, these programs can be offered during the summer, after school or—with assistance from school district administrators—as part of the district's K-12 curriculum.

HOW IT'S GOING:

Programming is offered in English and Spanish, both in-person and virtual, with the virtual offerings often live-streamed via mobile applications for those restricted to mobile technology.

Programs are needed to foster creative and entrepreneurial thinking among our area's youth in ways that will support both the cultural and economic integration of the Hispanic

community and foster small business development and economic growth.

At the same time, more programs are needed to foster entrepreneurship among older members of the population, especially those who do not attain advanced degrees, and for whom English may be a second language.



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