



Dayton's IBROC finds a home at The Entrepreneurs' Center and Miami Valley Urban League

The Innovative Business Resource Opportunity Center (IBROC) will serve Dayton entrepreneurs as a collaborative hub designed to streamline access to resources

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The Innovation Business Resource Opportunity Center (IBROC), a City of Dayton initiative dedicated to expanding opportunities for Dayton entrepreneurs, announced on April 23 at a Dayton City Commission meeting the appointment of the the Entrepreneurs' Center (EC) and Miami Valley Urban League (MVUL) to serve as joint operators, with anticipation to fully launch services in early summer 2025.

IBROC's mission is to break down barriers, simplify access to resources, and ensure that all Dayton small business owners—especially those historically underserved—have the tools they need to succeed.

"We're not just launching a program—we're shifting a culture," states Dayton Mayor Jeffrey J. Mims, Jr. "IBROC proves that when we listen to our community, invest wisely, and lead with equity, we all win."

Under the leadership of MVUL and EC, IBROC will serve as a centralized hub for business support in collaboration with Dayton-based Business Support Organizations, financial institutions, and community partners. IBROC will simplify the process for entrepreneurs to access funding, mentorship, and operational guidance—eliminating the confusion and frustration of navigating disconnected systems.

"We are starting from a strong foundation of existing programs and partnerships, and IBROC will amplify, strengthen, and expand that work, especially for entrepreneurs who we haven't previously worked with," said EC President Scott Koorndyk. "This is an exciting time for all of us, as IBROC allows us to act with one vision and voice."

"The Miami Valley Urban League is proud to co-host IBROC with the Entrepreneurs' Center, bringing our long-standing commitment to economic empowerment and business development to this innovative partnership," comments MVUL Executive Director Nikol Miller. "This collaboration is about creating a more dynamic, and hopefully seamless, business ecosystem for Dayton."

IBROC will have an office located at the Arcade Innovation Hub (31 S. Main St.) and a dedicated team of staff. Business support organizations and small businesses seeking more information can visit the location in person starting in May or connect with staff at info@DaytonIBROC.org.

The announcement of IBROC's new home was celebrated at a Dayton community event on the evening of April 23 hosted at the Arcade Innovation Hub by MVUL, EC, and program implementation partner Next Street and supported by Equapendence and GTB Advisors. The

event highlighted a look back at the evolution of IBROC and the proposed path forward in the coming months. MVUL and EC shared a program vision that includes the upcoming establishment of an IBROC Advisory Board and the hiring of an executive director anticipated to be announced this summer.

At a celebratory event held April 23 at the Arcade Innovation Hub, MVUL and EC shared a program vision that includes the establishment of an IBROC Advisory Board, already underway, and the hiring of an executive director anticipated to be announced this summer. Also introduced at the event was Cincinnati-based creative agency, SunnyBlu Creative Art Agency, which is working with program leaders to craft the narrative vision and brand identity for IBROC.

The announcement follows a comprehensive RFP process in the second half of 2024 to identify a Dayton-based organization to house and operate IBROC. For the past two years, a community-driven, co-design process—engaging more than 30 stakeholders from across the small business ecosystem—has shaped the strategy, vision, and goals of IBROC. This work culminated in the creation of a robust programmatic concept and a business implementation and financial plan designed to ensure the initiative’s long-term sustainability.

“At Next Street, our mission is to strengthen small business ecosystems by designing sustainable end-to-end solutions that help businesses and communities grow and thrive,” said Donald Jones, Partner at Next Street. “It has been a true honor to partner with the City of Dayton and leaders across the small business community to help bring their vision to life. We’re equally thrilled to see the Entrepreneurs’ Center and the Miami Valley Urban League come together as joint operators, and we’re excited to witness the collective impact they will create.”

The need for IBROC and a program to support Dayton small businesses arose from the 2021 Dayton Inclusive Recovery Playbook. The Playbook, combined with additional small business ecosystem research, stakeholder interviews, and community feedback identified that there is a strong need and opportunity for ecosystem infrastructure programming to help entrepreneurs thrive in Dayton.

“IBROC is a cornerstone of Dayton’s vision for an equitable economy,” said City Manager Shelley Dickstein. “It is built on data, a collaborative community voice, and a deep understanding of where we’ve been and where we’re going.”

“Every entrepreneur we met, every story we heard, helped shape what IBROC has become,” said Deputy City Manager LaShea Lofton. “This center is grounded in the lived experiences of Dayton’s diverse business community. Our implementation path has been intentional and inclusive. With the right partners and the right vision, we’re now ready to launch something that truly belongs to Dayton.”

Also introduced at the IBROC community event was Cincinnati-based creative agency SunnyBlu Creative Art, which is working with program leaders to craft the narrative vision and brand identity for IBROC. Throughout May in anticipation of the full IBROC launch, a selection of Dayton-based entrepreneurs will be featured in IBROC’s teaser campaign highlighting the diverse breadth of small business owners serving as IBROC’s primary target audience.

“Business owners need the right resources at the right time throughout their entire entrepreneurial journey from startup to scaling,” said IBROC implementation advisor Gloria M. Ware, CEO of GTB Advisors, LLC. “IBROC will deliver on these needs through expanded transparency, increased collaboration and coordination of the region’s business support organizations, and providing more opportunities for community feedback and input on business programming.”

“IBROC is a launchpad for untapped entrepreneurs in Dayton—bridging connection, equity, and community-driven growth,” adds IBROC implementation advisor Gail Francis Johnson, CEO of Equapendence. “Equapendence is proud to help shape a solution where local voices lead the way.”

IBROC leaders on April 24 convened the first meeting of the IBROC Advisory Board to kickstart launch efforts. Board members include:

Catherine Lentz, ECDI
Grace Jackson, Premier Health CPO - G&S
Jelani Johnson, Minority Business Assistance Center
Jeffrey Washington, Wright-Patt Credit Union
Jana Ramos-Ratliff, Ramos Ratliff Insurance Agency
Lisa Coker, Infinite Management Solutions
Nicole Fox, City of Dayton Procurement Manager
Nikol Miller, Miami Valley Urban League
Reginald Henderson, Lady Bug Services
Scott Koorndyk, Entrepreneurs' Center
Valerie Beerbower, Sinclair College - Goldman Sachs Program

About IBROC: IBROC is a collaborative hub for Dayton's entrepreneurs—designed to streamline access to resources, bridge gaps in the small business ecosystem, and elevate the city's untapped potential. Dedicated to establishing trust, equity, and accountability, IBROC connects new and established business owners to a powerful network of partners and service providers, offering clear pathways, time-saving tools, and relationship-driven support from startup to scale.

About the Entrepreneurs' Center: The Entrepreneurs' Center is a modern venture development organization that powers progress and prosperity through entrepreneurship. Annually, the EC works with over 1,000 entrepreneurs to start and grow companies, create jobs, generate revenue, and attract investment. The EC empowers main street and technology businesses through complementary professional services, including business planning, mentoring, training, networking, commercialization, and capital investment. The EC's talented and experienced team of advisors, entrepreneurs-in-residence, and staff design and facilitate diverse, world-class business acceleration programs on behalf of corporations, higher education institutions, and government agencies, including the U.S. Dept. of Defense, from their headquarters at The Hub Powered by PNC Bank in the historic Dayton Arcade.

About Miami Valley Urban League: The Urban League has been serving the Miami Valley since 1947, with a mission to end generational poverty through advocacy and by empowering individuals to establish careers, become entrepreneurs, build wealth, and develop as leaders.

About Next Street: For more than 20 years, corporations, governments, and philanthropies have hired Next Street to strengthen the small businesses they rely on. As a firm, Next Street provides end-to-end solutions — from ecosystem assessments and strategies to resource platforms and accelerators — for their clients to propel the small businesses in their communities and supply chains. Next Street solutions ultimately help small businesses, whether they are solo entrepreneurs or advanced suppliers, to unlock new revenue, build wealth, and reinvest in their communities.

The Dayton community can anticipate additional information about IBROC to be released in the coming months. Sign up for alerts at DaytonIBROC.org or email info@DaytonIBROC.org for more information.

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At the April 23 IBROC kick-off event (left to right): Scott Koorndyk, president, Entrepreneurs' Center; Nikol Miller, executive director, Miami Valley Urban League; LaShea Lofton, deputy city manager, City of Dayton.

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