

Michigan Municipal League

Hatch Detroit



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Better Communities. Better Michigan.



PROJECT DETAILS:

NAME:

Hatch Detroit

DATE:

2011–Present

LOCATION:

Detroit, Michigan

CATEGORIES:

Entrepreneurship
Community Building

THE GIST:

The Hatch Detroit Contest seeks to give life to big ideas by granting \$50,000 to the best, most innovative and promising local retail business concepts.



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PROJECT SCOPE:

The Challenge:

How can we help rebuild the city by supporting local entrepreneurs?

Overview:

Hatch aims to promote a more vibrant urban community by empowering local niche retail businesses with the capital and support they need to succeed and grow. Up-and-coming innovators have the opportunity to showcase their new retail concepts to business experts, who then select a winner to receive a grant of \$50,000 and additional startup resources to launch the storefront. Ideas of all stages abound in Detroit, and the contest provides an opportunity for the entrepreneurial community to give back and highlight the city's emerging talent.

Accomplishments:

- Collected 150,000 votes over the past two years from engaged community members, business leaders, and program enthusiasts.
- Helped the contest winners open boutique retail Hugh and a new restaurant, La FERIA.
- Showcased 20 small business ideas during the semifinals, with 45 percent moving forward to open their own storefronts.

- Garnered a \$50,000 Comerica Bank sponsorship.
- Amassed more than 7,000 followers on Facebook and Twitter, spreading the word about Detroit's entrepreneurial culture and providing social space for networking.

Organization:

Hatch currently operates with an executive director, a communications coordinator, and a board of trustees. The program relies heavily on volunteer support and partnerships with local businesses and sponsors during the contest cycle.

Budget:

The Hatch prize of \$50,000 was originally funded through a series of private donations. Comerica Bank currently sponsors the prize, and additional corporate donations cover overhead and staff. The winners receive additional support including: environmental assessment services, interior design guidance, legal services, design and branding services, and IT support.

Funding:

Hatch Detroit has group of corporate donors and partners who have pledged their support of their mission and values.

Participants:

Hatch Detroit's founders often hit the pavement, knocking on doors and attending local events to gain support for the program. It is key to understand the audience and build the program with its most important stakeholders. Emerging entrepreneurs who participate in Hatch often continue moving with their ideas after the contest.

Inspiration:

Hatch Detroit was cofounded by Nick Gorga and Ted Balowski, metro Detroit natives who knew there were big ideas for new businesses in the city and wanted to help make them a reality. The Hatch Detroit organization now champions and supports independent retail businesses in Detroit through funding contests, education, exposure, and mentoring. Gorga and Balowski hoped this injection of entrepreneurial energy will inspire others in the community to initiate change.

Actions Taken:

1) KNOCK ON DOORS.

When you have a great idea, it is important to get critical feedback from your peers and potential participants. Hatch Detroit gained traction thanks to an on-ground promotional campaign and inquiry at local entrepreneurial events.

2) MAKE A PLAN.

Take the time to create a master plan including timeline, goals, budget, fundraising strategies, marketing, and communications. Being proactive about your plan will save you time and energy in the long run. Outline your needs and assets at different phases of the process and build a roadmap for success. You will want to set strict deadlines for each phase of the contest.





3) SETUP TECH AND COMMUNICATION TOOLS.

Work with your technology and communication teams build a clean website that allows for a streamlined application and voting process. Applicants may need to upload supporting files or setup a time to discuss their proposal with program staff.

4) ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS.

Applications for the Hatch Detroit Contest are available for about a month and a half, and it is recommended to run the contest cycle at the same time each year. This builds anticipation and also allows applicants ample time to prepare. Entrepreneurs must submit an executive summary, resume, and video/digital sample of their work. Last year there were 270 submissions. Tips for the submission process include: Fully develop your retail concept, start putting together a budget, build your online audience, get creative, test your product/concept around town.

5) EVALUATE THE IDEAS.

The Hatch Board of Trustees reviews the applications and narrows the submissions to 25 contestants. The contestants are then ranked with a numeric formula, and 10 participants become semi-finalists. Plan to announce the semi-finalists in a creative way, and use social media to promote their ideas and build a following for the contest. Great sponsors have helped Hatch Detroit spread the word and share stories from applicants.

6) OPEN THE PUBLIC VOTE.

Engage your city in the process. Hatch Detroit relies heavily on its website (hatch-detroit.com) and its Facebook page to promote online voting, but it has also created old-school on-site voting booths to engage individuals at unexpected settings. Consider a pop-up booth at a local tavern or weekend gathering.



7) ANNOUNCE FINALISTS.

The public vote will narrow the applicants to four finalists. Set up a second public vote to determine a final winner. Eliminate stress and voter's fatigue by limiting the time period to a week or few days and plan your grand finale.

8) HOST FINAL EVENT.

Find a cool venue and allow the finalists to pitch their ideas to a panel of experts. Public voting can end that evening and the winner can be announced on-site. Events are exciting, and it is a great networking opportunity for mentors, sponsors, and participants.

9) HELP YOUR ALUMNI.

Many entrepreneurs who did not make it to the finals will want to continue with their plans. Provide a network and support system for your program alumni to help them move forward with their ideas. Over half of the Hatch Detroit semi-finalists continue to work on their businesses.

Lessons Learned:

- Get Out on the Ground.
"Go to events for three months and talk to people about your idea. Ask for advice on what you are doing and talk to community that you are trying to impact."
- Define Fundraising Strategies.
"Fundraising can be a challenge, so plan to put some effort in. Clearly articulate your ideas and develop a few methods for communication and relationship building."

Expert:

Ted Balowski, Founder Hatch Detroit, ted@hatchdetroit.com.

Vittoria Katanski, Executive Director Hatch Detroit, vittoria@hatchdetroit.com

Similar Projects:

Gig Tank

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The Center for 21st Century Communities

Building 21st century communities

Experts from around the world—in academic, business, and public sectors alike—agree that investing in communities is a critical element to long-term economic development in the 21st century. Michigan’s future depends on its ability to attract and retain knowledge-based workers. Central to attracting this priceless commodity is *place*. Research proves that successful 21st century communities effectively leverage the assets summarized in this brochure. Learn more and stay engaged at mml.org.

Who we are...

The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. We are a nonprofit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs; our people are dynamic, energetic, and highly approachable, passionately and aggressively pushing change to achieve better communities and a better Michigan.

What we know...

Never before have so many diverse interests, from academic researchers to the business community to government leaders, shared a single conclusion: Michigan’s future depends on its ability to attract knowledge-based workers. And what is central to attracting this priceless commodity? *Place*, specifically vibrant 21st century communities.

What we offer...

Through its Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3), the League provides education, technical assistance, public outreach, and unprecedented access to experts and resources. The 21c3 is a “one-stop-shop” for communities interested in creating and sustaining livable, desirable, and unique places that attract the highly skilled, creative, and talented workforce of the next century.



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