DETROIT NEIGHBORHOOD ENTREPRENEURS PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Fall 2026 - Winter 2027 Catalog

The University of Michigan's Detroit Neighborhood Entrepreneurs Project (DNEP) is now recruiting Detroit business owners to work with U-M students during the Fall semester (September - December 2026) and the Winter Semester (January - March 2027). To help you identify the classes and programs that best suit your business' needs, this catalog includes dates, time commitments, and eligibility requirements, along with deliverables you can expect from your consultants-in-training.

*****Services are offered at NO CHARGE to entrepreneurs.*****

WHERE to START (Year-Round, Barrier-Free Programs)
No applications are required to access free, in-person 1:1 appointments with a DNEP Accounting Consultant or Community Tech Consultant. Sign up at DNEP.umich.edu

Applications and interviews ARE required for Motor City Multipliers - DNEP's matching service that places businesses as clients with faculty-supervised student teams for semester-long consulting projects.

Contents:

Year-Round Programs (Accounting & Community Tech Consulting)..... 2
Semester-Long Class Placements (Motor City Multipliers Program).....4
Preparing for your Interview for a DNEP Class.....10
Why You Want to be a DNEP Client 11
When to Hire Your Own Intern from the University of Michigan and How.....12

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DNEP Accounting

Every business needs a strong financial foundation
Tools, Training & Talent for the Businesses building Detroit's Future

Overview: Typically, the first step in your client relationship with DNEP. Students from the Ross School of Business, under the supervision of U-M faculty, staff, and alumni, offer in-person, 1:1 accounting help at multiple Detroit partner sites, for as many times as you need to gain command over your numbers and use that knowledge to inform your business decisions

When & Where Offered: YEAR-ROUND on Fridays, two sites each week, all meetings by appointment



Questions Student Accounting Consultants Can Answer:

How do I use my accounting software? How should I set up my chart of accounts? What story do my numbers tell? How can I use my financial statements to support my pitch? What are the parts of a loan application? When does a line of credit make sense? How do I create financial projections?

Common Deliverables: Creation of financial statements (Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statements), Financial Projections, Referrals to microlenders, grant opportunities, or crowdfunding options to get the capital you need to run a sustainable and profitable business

Eligibility: Open to both for-profits and non-profits throughout metro Detroit, at any stage of development. Learn more about the program on the Free Accounting page of the DNEP website, and book an appointment. No applications or referrals required!

Client Commitment: As-needed. Schedule one appointment or several in a row. Come back here each time you need something new!



"I absolutely loved working with the DNEP group. They provided me with the assistance I needed to get funding for my business. The team is very professional, very knowledgeable and understanding. They treated me very well and were very attentive to my unique needs."

—Kimberly Jones, Epic Infants; BUSINESS FUNDED

Community Tech Consultants at Live6 & JEI

Your Neighborhood, Your Tech Experts
Together, we are Bridging the Digital Divide in Detroit

Overview: Self-taught tech entrepreneurs from Detroit, trained and co-managed with U-M faculty and staff, offer in-person, 1:1 tech help at JEI and Live6 Alliance, for as many meetings as you need to integrate technology into your business and use it effectively.

When & Where Offered: YEAR-ROUND, Tuesdays-Thursdays, at JEI & Live6, meetings by appointment



Offered in partnership with Jefferson East, Inc. and Live6 Alliance, with support from faculty and staff from the School of Information, Ross School of Business, School of Social Work/Ford School of Public Policy, and the U-M Center for Innovation in Detroit and funding from the National Science Foundation

Common Questions Community Tech Consultants Can Help You Answer:
How do I recover my passwords? Which website platform should I use to host my website and will you show me how to set it up? How do I get my business to show up higher on search results when someone searches Google for it? How do google email templates work? How can I use ChatGPT in my business?

Common Deliverables: Technology audit and recommendations; resolution of a technical problem; summary charts comparing different platforms to help a business owner decide which software to use; set up and use of social media. Note that CTCs are here to teach you how to do it yourself!

Eligibility: Open to anyone in the Detroit metro area, for-profits and nonprofits, at any stage, at no charge to business owners. Learn more on our website and book directly with the CTCs.

Client Commitment: As needed. All clients complete an intake interview, then get to work



"Over the past 10 years, I've worked with local shops, service providers, creatives, and nonprofits - people who just want their tech to work without the hassle. I speak your language (not just tech jargon) and make sure you feel supported every step of the way."

—Donovan Brown, Community Tech Consultant, Live6 Alliance

Motor City Multipliers

Real Help. Right now. Rooted in community.
You Have a Vision. We'll Help You Multiply It.

Are you looking for fresh ideas and practical support for your business? Let's get you a team.

Since 2016, the Detroit Neighborhood Entrepreneurs Project has matched 900+ businesses with faculty-supervised teams, in succession, at multiple U-M schools to provide Detroit businesses with wrap-around, long-term support.



Need a business model revision? Got it. Legal? We have that. Design. Yup. Marketing? Of course!

How it Works: University of Michigan students enroll in various "action-based learning" or "practical learning" courses, where they apply their classroom knowledge to actual business challenges. Many of those classes are taught by faculty with Detroit roots and a commitment to community and economic development. DNEP unites those faculty to form a multidisciplinary network, and then recruits small businesses like yours to be clients in their classes. Together, we provide the wrap-around support you need to create a legacy business in your neighborhood.

Ready to apply?
Sign up at DNEP.umich.edu

What Your Business Gains:

- **Professionally-supervised consulting services** in strategy, finance, law, marketing, technology, operations, or design - **at no financial cost to you**
- **Fresh perspectives** from bright minds trained in the latest business approaches
- **Practical solutions** to drive real growth
- **Ongoing partnership** that builds your business capacity over time

What Students Gain From YOU:

- **Real-world experience** applying classroom knowledge to actual business challenges
- **Professional development** through meaningful client relationships
- **Cultural humility** working with Detroit's diverse business community
- **Career-building connections** that often inspire them to invest their futures in Detroit

A True Partnership: This is a collaborative relationship. Your business expertise and community knowledge are just as valuable as the students' academic training. Together, we're building a stronger Detroit.

Legal Representation (Community Enterprise Clinic)



Overview: Under the supervision of Michigan attorneys and law faculty **Dana Thompson** and **Albert Pak**, **Michigan Law students in their second or third year** conduct legal research and provide legal advice for transactional issues that entrepreneurs and nonprofits encounter. Unlike other DNEP classes, law students act as **pro bono legal counsel.**

When Offered: Fall & Winter Semesters

Insights Student Research Can Provide:
What do I need to do to set up the ownership structure of my company correctly? How do I protect my intellectual property? What kind of agreements do I need for my workers or vendors?

Common Deliverables: Contracts, leases, by-laws or operating agreements, MOUs, trademark applications, memos with advice about licensing or regulatory requirements.

Eligibility: For-profit or nonprofit entities in underserved areas, especially in Detroit, but not exclusively. In line with its community and economic development goals, the Community Enterprise Clinic weights more favorably applications by **social enterprises and businesses/organizations that have the ability to make a difference in a neighborhood**. Preference also for **entrepreneurs who are low-income and/or from the neighborhood they seek to improve**. Where there are multiple owners without written decision making allocated to only one person, all owners must participate in and provide responses to student questions.

Client Commitment: This course offers the most variation in time commitment. All owners must make themselves available for initial interviews and a site visit, plus **respond to law student questions within 48 hours**. Generally, law students work on 1-3 matters per client in any given year. Clients who respond quickly to student inquiries tend to get more work completed.



"I am beyond grateful for DNEP and the students' services. Being an artist, it's essential to have your work protected. Over the years, I have had several instances when someone would ask to use my artwork without mention of compensation. The law students were able to successfully trademark my business name and copyright all of my artwork, including editing the contracts that I use for commission work. Now, I feel more confident and secure knowing that my business and artwork are protected."

—Sherrie Savage, Naturally ILLustrated & The Coloring Museum

Tech Solutions (Business+Tech's TECH PLUS Club - Ross)

Overview: Are you a founder of a startup or an owner of a small business who **suspects that you are doing something inefficiently**? **Need a technological solution** to one of your pain points, but no time to research? Receive free data-driven recommendations through Business+Tech's student club, TECH PLUS. You'll work with a **diverse team of top undergraduate students** at the University of Michigan guided by **Ross School of Business faculty Phil Brabbs** and **program manager Emilee Studley** to address your critical business needs.

When Offered: Fall and Winter semesters



Deliverables: Assess the technical needs and solutions that will enable key business objectives. The **final presentation** will include **recommendations of next steps** for the business to take to achieve its goals; depending on time, it may be possible for students to begin implementation of the selected technology solution.

Insights Student Research Can Provide: *What products already exist on the market that could potentially be used to resolve a pain point to gain more traction as a business? Which product(s) make the most sense for my business or startup, given my staffing, budget, and comfort with technology?*

Eligibility: Located in Detroit; business **facing a complex problem with no obvious solution**; **owner or founder is full time** in the business; in business at least one year; **business has made sales and can share data** for analysis.

Client Commitment: Three hour time commitment per week, including a **standard weekly meetin**g with student teams for approximately three months during Fall or Winter Semester. Regularly communicate with student teams and respond to student emails within 24 hours, including on weekends.



"I initially sought help from the DNEP Team to gain fresh perspectives for a new iteration of my Spanish S.W.A.G. edtech product. However, their insightful questions and collaborative energy led to the creation of a totally different, game-changing professional development tool for K-12 educators. I'm so impressed that I've continued working with one of the team members to bring this vision to life, with a release date of June 2025!

—Jesse Feliz, Founder/Creator of Teacher S.W.A.G."

Business Growth (Capstone MAP - Ross)

Overview: Are you a small business facing a **complex business problem**? Receive free data-driven recommendations through U-M's Capstone MAP Courses. You'll work with a **diverse team of top undergraduate students or Masters of Management students** in the Ross School of Business, guided by **Ross School faculty Chris Mueller** and others, to address your critical business needs.



When Offered: Winter Semester, but applications for the BBA Capstone and MM Capstone courses close on October 9, 2026

Deliverables: Research data and final presentation with recommendations of next steps for the business to take to achieve its goals.

Insights Student Research Can Provide:
If an existing business launches a new product line, where should they focus their energy/resources? If a business wants to expand, where should they open a new location? If a business caters to two different customer segments, how should they price their products?

Eligibility: Located in metro Detroit or Hamtramck; business **facing a complex problem with no obvious solution**; **owner is full time in the business**; **in business at least one year**; **business has made sales** and **has data it can share** for data analysis.

Client Commitment: Three hour time commitment per week, including a **standard weekly meeting** with student teams for approximately four months (January–April). Regularly communicate with student teams and **respond to student emails within 24 hours, including on weekends**.

***Exception for Applying to this Class:** Unlike other DNEP classes, you should NOT wait to be contacted for an interview. Instead, after (1) completing DNEP's standard Client Prospect form at DNEP.umich.edu, please (2) submit a proposal directly to the Ross School's Office of Action-Based Learning



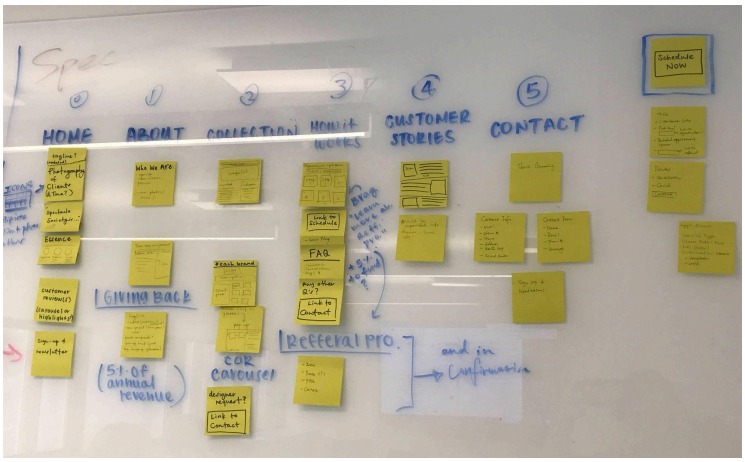
"It was a pleasure working with the students from the Ross School. They helped us better understand the growing market for our newest products, and made recommendations for us to adjust our prices and distribution strategy in a way that is beneficial to our business and our customers. We hope to work with them again in the future. Their insight, hard work and thoughtful approach to problem solving is an asset to the small businesses they support."

—Annie Hakim, Featherstone Garden

Design/Branding (Stamps DNEP Design Studio)

Overview: Business owner clients work with students in the Stamps School of Art & Design, under the supervision of **Stamps School of Art & Design faculty Jill Greene** to enhance their business' brand identity and visual presence. Students emphasize **unique brand stories through storytelling, language analysis, and visual branding.** They'll provide services including the (re)design of a company's logo and other visual elements, along with integrating the visual assets into the company's marketing and operational materials (e.g. website, social media, etc.).

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When offered: Winter semester

Common Deliverables: Branding guidelines, revised websites, refined logos, renaming recommendations

Insights Student Research Can Provide:
How can I ensure my branding materials are consistent with my brand identity? How can I incorporate my brand's story and values into my visual identity? How can I optimize my website's design to enhance user experience and engagement?

Eligibility: Metro Detroit-based small business. Second stage businesses preferred. **May not be working with a designer or marketing consultant while working with a student team.**

Client Commitment: Standard **weekly meeting** with student teams for approximately four months (January–April). Regularly communicate with student teams and **respond to student emails within 24 hours, including on weekends.**



"Working with Marty to develop the brand identity for Alora Grove was an amazing experience that I feel fortunate to have had. Through this collaboration, I gained valuable skills in client communication, meeting deadlines, delivering high-quality design work, and adhering to brand guidelines—all of which strengthened my professional development. I also had the chance to learn more about Alora Grove's inspiring mission and to work closely with its warm, kind, and passionate CEO, Marty Sheedy. I'm grateful for the opportunity and proud to have contributed to a brand that values both purpose and heart."

— Amira Martin, Stamps School of Art & Design '25

Advertising Campaigns (Persuasive Communication)

Overview: Business owner clients work with a team of undergraduate students from the Ross School of Business & the College of Literature, Science & the Arts (LSA), who are trained and supervised by **Ross School faculty Amy Angell** and her teaching assistant team. *This class is a **simulation of working with advertising agencies.*** **Student teams compete against each other to design and present pitches** for advertising campaigns. **Clients choose a winner** from the 3-4 different pitches; you **keep the deliverables from the winning ad campaign** so you can implement it.

When offered: Fall and Winter semesters

Insights Student Research Can Provide:
How do I attract new customers? Where should I focus my marketing efforts to reach my target customers? How much of an advertising budget do I need, and how could I best spend that money? How might I measure the success of an advertising campaign to know if it's working?

Sample Deliverables (from each team): 2 pitch presentations with video recordings, 2 papers (1 with expansive research and 1 with creative content), and a **comprehensive turnkey campaign** that may include new branding (logo, color palette, messaging), mockups for packaging, signage and events, website templates, original brand photos and videos, newsletters, and/or social media content.

Eligibility: In business for 3+ years; have a marketing budget of $5,000 for implementation; do not have marketing staff and **not working with a designer or marketer** now. **Owner available to personally work with all 3-4 student teams and not enrolled in another program**. This class is best for businesses that have insight on marketing efforts that have and have not worked well, as well as an established customer base.

Client Commitment: Just like working with a professional ad agency, this class requires significant input and engagement from clients. Clients **must share their customer data** for analysis, make it possible for **all teams to do site visits**, and **provide product samples**. The owner must **attend the beginning of the semester kick-off and final presentation in Ann Arbor**. Each week, **the owner will provide feedback to 3-4 different student teams on their campaign ideas via email or text**, plus attend a standing weekly meeting with each team. On average, **expect to spend 5 hours/week total x 13 weeks.** The **fair market value** of deliverables for this class is around **$25,000**.



"Great program! The team of students was delightful to work with–full of enthusiasm. They were professional and well-organized, dedicated to regularly scheduled meetings and each team member was responsible for certain tasks. We were thrilled with the results of their research and the recommendations that they presented to us."

- Becky Riess, Thumbprint Fulfillment

Preparing for Your Interview to Be a Client in a DNEP Class

Thanks for your interest in working with U-M students! We are honored to have a chance to work with you to achieve your business goals and create anchor businesses in Detroit neighborhoods.

Program Costs:

DNEP students' services are offered at no financial cost to business owners, but they require a significant investment of your time. **DNEP is based on reciprocity and mutual learning.** Students are applying their coursework to your business under faculty supervision, and you are teaching our professionals-in-training how to work with clients. **Only you know** what paths your business has taken or explored, so students rely on you to share your business data and learn **things about your business that do not appear on the internet.**

Every student team does research and analyzes data as part of their course instruction, so **in every course, you will be required to share confidential sales or client information with your student team** (students sign Confidentiality Agreements, whenever requested).

What We're Looking For:

1. **Dependability.** In all classes, students have milestone assignments due. Assignments help them complete your project timely and give you a better work product. We prioritize clients whose life circumstances allow them to keep their weekly standing meetings, respond to texts or emails within 24 hours, and be attentive during meetings (e.g., not driving while trying to review a presentation).

2. **Preparedness.** As with any other consultant, we can help you more if you are organized, know what you need, and know your passwords to share data. (Book an appointment with the CTCs if you need help with that.)

3. **Open-Mindedness.** Students' grades depend on them proposing changes to how your business is operating now, so you will always be advised to change something. As with any consultant, if you don't agree with students' recommendations, you are under no obligation to take their advice, but we can be more helpful to business owners who are open to following the data.

How to Prepare for the Interview:

1. **Complete the Intake Form** on the DNEP site;
2. **Create a list of challenges that could potentially be addressed** by any class you would like to be matched with; and
3. Be prepared to describe either (a) how your business/organization meets an established need in your neighborhood, or (b) why your business could be a national brand, or (c) how your business supports other Detroit businesses.

You Got This!

Why You Want to Be a DNEP Client

Let us be part of your hero's journey! Most DNEP clients access an average of three services for their business, but there's no set limit. Our goal is to support you until you don't need us anymore -- because you have become so profitable that you can hire professional staff. Here's what some of our past and current clients say about us:



"It was an absolute pleasure working with the DNEP team, not only did they bring in a fresh perspective and make me rethink my existing processes, their diligence and perseverance working with my team as well as the software's customer support team is truly remarkable. It was a mutually educational and enlightening experience!"
—Bennett Lai, Owner of Marupo Eats

"I am so grateful to have had the pleasure to work with DNEP! My interns were absolutely amazing, knowledgeable, and professional. I am very proud of the work the team has done over the last 2 months. I feel very confident in my abilities to implement the ladies' recommendations & suggestions. I am so appreciative & grateful for this opportunity! I can't thank you all enough!"
—Toni Porter, Owner of Toni's Collection





"The Detroit Neighborhood Entrepreneurs Project (DNEP) has been an invaluable resource for me and my business. The students at the Ross School of Business excelled at identifying my specific needs and provided remarkable support. I am immensely grateful to DNEP for their assistance throughout my business journey. I eagerly anticipate continuing my partnership with this exceptional team of students and program management."
—Katrina Cross-Daniels, Founder of Katrina Cross Photography

Why You Might Want to Hire an Intern from the University of Michigan (and How to Do it)



When you are placed with a team of University of Michigan students as a client or "sponsor" for a U-M class through our Motor City Multipliers program, your students:

- Are enrolled in a for-credit class that they paid tuition for (this is why their services are free for you),
- Complete a "project" that has been carefully scoped by DNEP staff and supervising faculty; this project is similar in size and scale to the projects that other student teams in that same class are doing and meets the faculty members' teaching goals for that class,
- Will conduct research as part of their project,
- Are not permitted to take on additional work for a client beyond the project scope while the class is ongoing,
- Will produce recommendations for you and give you the supporting data behind those recommendations (along with any data that cuts in favor of a different course of action, if that happens),
- Are trying to learn foundational consulting skills and apply what they have learned in their classes to your business' challenge,
- Are trained and supervised by faculty, and
- Receive a grade for their work (and often, are graded on a curve against each other).

Like you, our student service providers wear many hats. They are also job candidates, athletes, members of student clubs, friends, student workers, and sometimes entrepreneurs themselves. With most student teams comprising 4-5 people each, scheduling alone can be a logistical feat!

If what you really need is someone to work in your business, take on a project that doesn't fit well within one of the offerings in this catalog, or take on "other duties as assigned," you might consider hiring an intern instead. There is no charge for external employers to post jobs with the University's Student Employment Office.

