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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR &  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Alexa Jeffress  
Director, Economic  
& Workforce  
Development

**SUBJECT:** Remote Business Assistance Pilot

**DATE:** September 8, 2021

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City Administrator  
Approval

Date: Sep 13, 2021

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### INFORMATION

In an effort to bring City business services to the community, the Economic & Workforce Development Department's (EWD's) Business Development Division staff has launched the Remote Business Assistance Center (BAC) pilot.

Beginning September 16 through December 2021, City staff will be available at five neighborhood library branches to help entrepreneurs and business owners. Thirty-minute appointments will be available at the following Oakland Public Library branches:

- West Oakland (every other Monday morning)
- 81st Avenue (every other Tuesday evening)
- César E. Chávez (every other Wednesday evening)
- Golden Gate (every other Thursday morning)
- Eastmont (every other Friday afternoon)

These locations were selected based on suitability of available City facilities, anticipated interest within the business community, and equitable access for previously under-served neighborhoods.

Appointments are by advance reservation only, to maximize limited City staff resources, prevent queuing by business owners to save them time and to keep everyone safer during the pandemic.

Businesses can schedule an appointment at [www.oaklandca.gov/RemoteBAC](http://www.oaklandca.gov/RemoteBAC), by clicking the "Visit the scheduling page" link and then selecting the preferred location to view available times. For non-English speakers, those without Internet access, or anyone who needs assistance, appointments can be scheduled by calling (510) 238-7398. The scheduling platform is Bookings, which is part of the City's Microsoft 365 platform and integrates with staff's individual calendars. For appointments made with a text-enabled phone number, reminder emails and text messages will be sent automatically.

Through staff and partnerships with business support organizations, the City will be able to offer in-person assistance in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Assistance in other languages will be provided using the City's over-the-phone interpretation service.

The pilot program will allow staff to gather data (i.e., number of appointments made, number of clients served, hours of follow-up, which locations served the most business owners, etc.), gauge interest within the business community, and learn City resource needs for a year-round program before presenting recommendations to the City Council for a long-term program that brings City business support services into neighborhoods. Staff anticipates scheduling an item to the Community & Economic Development Committee late this year with the pilot findings and recommendations.

The soft launch of the Remote BAC pilot began with an announcement in the City's weekly business update email on August 27 and social media posts starting September 1. [Promotional flyers in six languages](#) have been produced and distributed at participating branch libraries, and will be distributed to Oakland's extensive business support network.

Staff recommends that the City Council consider taking the following steps to help inform their constituents of the Remote BAC pilot:

- 1) Amplify the City's social media posts via each Council Office's social media accounts:
  - a. [Twitter](#)
  - b. [Facebook](#)
  - c. [LinkedIn](#)
- 2) Include an announcement of the Remote BAC in Council newsletter to constituents.
- 3) Distribute printed flyers at upcoming in-person events.

Special thanks to the Oakland Public Library staff who have been supportive and accommodating partners for the Remote BAC pilot.

Respectfully submitted,



ALEXA JEFFRESS

Director, Economic & Workforce Development  
Department

For questions, please contact Harry Hamilton, Marketing Coordinator, at (510) 238-6766.