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MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL LAUNCHES "STEP UP CHICAGO" BUSINESS COACHING SERIES

Step Up Chicago Connects Entrepreneurs with Successful Industry Leaders at Free Networking Events

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced the launch of *Step Up Chicago*, a new series of free events pairing business leaders with entrepreneurs for personalized coaching sessions. Step Up Chicago, a program supported by the City's Small Business Advisory Council (SBAC) and Accion Chicago, will help entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses by learning from leaders in their industries. The series is modeled after the successful Samuel Adams "Brewing the American Dream" Speed Coaching series.

"*Step Up Chicago* is a new public-private partnership that takes advantage of the incredible business talent we have in Chicago and provides a new resource to the thousands of small businesses and entrepreneurs in Chicago," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "It is an opportunity for entrepreneurs to get guidance on their specific challenges from industry executives."

The SBAC and Accion Chicago will hold several Step Up Chicago events throughout the City in 2014, hosted by different sponsors, starting with Samuel Adams Boston Brewing. The senior executive team from Samuel Adams will share its industry expertise with entrepreneurs and small businesses on April 7 at the Ignite Glass Studio, 401 N. Armour, from 5:30p.m. - 8:30p.m. At this coaching session businesses will receive specific expertise in the food and beverage industry, but this free event is open to all entrepreneurs and small businesses.. A second event will be hosted this summer and a third will be hosted in the fall.

At each *Step Up Chicago* Business Coaching event, participants will have one-on-one coaching sessions with experts in accounting, HR, distribution, marketing, legal, and other functional areas. Participants will rotate between sessions every 20 minutes, providing them with opportunities to speak with multiple industry leaders about their business. There will also be opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs to network with each other.

Samuel Adams held an event last year that drew nearly 100 Chicago small businesses and entrepreneurs, and at least one new Chicago small business was born. Tom Kern served as a coach at the event, where he met David Zoltan. The two committed to a Kickstarter campaign through Seed Chicago, another small business program launched by the City last year, to open Geek Bar in Lakeview. Their goal was \$9,700, but they raised \$44,538 and are on track to open this spring - a direct result of speed coaching.

Step Up Chicago is just one of many ways in which the City of Chicago supports small business owners across the city. Last year, the City launched its Neighborhood Small Business Strategy, providing several new supports to local Chambers of Commerce to foster small business, created a new Small Business Center (SBC) website, and launched Site Selector to help entrepreneurs find locations. Just last month, the City launched a Neighborhood Small Business Challenge to bring new services to small businesses.

The City of Chicago's Small Business Advisory Council (SBAC), launched last year by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, ensures that the voices and needs of small business owners from every corner of Chicago are heard. The SBAC consists of leaders across the small business community including, entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, business education groups, and small business lenders.

Accion is an alternative lending organization dedicated to providing credit and other business services to small business owners who do not have access to traditional sources of financing. By encouraging the economic self-reliance of microentrepreneurs, Accion helps businesses and communities grow. Since 1994, Accion Chicago has made more than 3,300 loans totaling \$30 million. Accion Chicago is an independent member of the Accion U.S. Network (us.accion.org), the largest micro- and small business-lending network in the United States.

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