

SMALL BUSINESS

A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION



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What should small businesses be focused on in 2026? In this special section, leading experts from the greater Los Angeles region share their insights on what small businesses need to know to succeed today—from smart financing and digital marketing to strategic growth and community engagement. Discover practical advice and proven strategies from the trusted advisors and genuine experts to help your emerging business thrive in a competitive marketplace.

SMALL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

What are the most important economic trends shaping small businesses in 2026, and how should owners adapt for them?

ALVARADO: Inflation continues to challenge small businesses in 2026. Higher supplier costs, rents, insurance and payrolls are straining budgets, and for many businesses, an increase in product or service prices has not fully offset these expenses. One of the first steps a small business can take to strengthen their resilience to any shifts in the economic environment is to build and maintain a 60–90-day cash reserve and continue to reassess budget and pricing on a quarterly basis. This sort of regular activity enables data-driven decision making that allows a small business to not only keep pace with rising costs but also improve its competitive position. By thoroughly analyzing key performance indicators and leveraging real-time data, owners can accurately identify which products or services have the biggest impact on profit margins and shift accordingly to support sustainable growth. This approach will not only emphasize high-performing offerings, but it will also uncover areas for improvement, enabling business owners to make informed decisions about resource allocation, pricing strategies and market expansion. Lastly, businesses should prioritize maintaining strong liquidity to enable a faster pivot when new inventory opportunities arise, to take on larger contracts or to invest in essential equipment upgrades. In today’s dynamic environment, cash reserves are no longer just a safety net—they are a strategic necessity for seizing growth opportunities, weathering unexpected disruptions and ensuring operational flexibility. By consistently strengthening cash reserves, a small business can respond quickly to market changes and improve its competitive position.

What are best practices for attracting and retaining talent in a competitive labor market?

LIGHT: Stay tuned to the hourly and salary levels of comparable workers. Workers are doing so. Offer strong benefits packages related to health insurance, holidays, vacation and sick time. Offer bonus programs based on productivity, both employee-specific and company-specific. Employers often provide employee bonus plans that are not tied to company profitability. When the company has a bad year, it is forced to pay out extreme bonuses to productive employees. It may be necessary to pay such bonuses, but scaling the value by also tying them to company success is often a good strategy. Give employees a summary of the value of all benefits and compensation they receive, so employees see the overall value of labor burden, and not just their basic hourly rate or salary.

How are interest rates, inflation, and access to capital impacting small business growth right now?

BARRAGAN: Interest rates are still too high, inflation is stubbornly high, and access to capital is largely non-existent. If home mortgage rates are still a little too high, business loans are too expensive and even more so with alternative lenders, e.g., Merchant Cash Advance, etc. Inflation continues to drive up material, labor, fuel, and insurance costs. For example, plexiglass wholesale prices just went up 20% because of the US-Iran war; other petroleum-based products, e.g., fertilizer, are seeing similar cost increases. Local small businesses are struggling to control retail prices in the face of an uncontrollable world and economy, while receiving little help from financial institutions mandated to lend and invest in the communities from which they draw deposits. Another new development is that California regional banks are having to step into the shoes of national banks that no longer make small business loans locally. And the Los Angeles area has only six Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) to try to meet the needs of almost half a million small businesses countywide that have been turned down for a bank loan.

What are the most common financial challenges small businesses are facing in today’s economic environment?



BANNER: In my experience, small and middle-sized businesses continue to face one common financial challenge: access to capital. Numerous local studies have shown that demand for capital remains strong; however, attainable funding sources have continued to have its historical ongoing challenges. In 2018 the Milken Institute’s Partnership for Lending into Underserved Markets (PLUM) researched barriers and solutions in the Los Angeles and Baltimore markets and concluded Minority-owned small businesses are major drivers of job creation and economic growth, but they face higher credit denial rates and limited financing options. In LA’s post-COVID economy many small businesses have experienced negative impacts and are still recovering from government forced shutdowns. By example LA’s restaurant industry has seen massive closings and it has yet to stabilize. Among regulated financial institutions, these factors are often seen as evidence of heightened risk. The explosive growth of private credit for larger commercial borrowers is an example of how alternative channels to borrowing from regulated lenders have taken advantage of gaps in the market and found itself taking away opportunities from bankers. In November 2022, the Biden administration, launched the \$10 Billion State Small Business Credit Initiative 2.0. California received a \$1.1 billion allocation. These funds were granted to each state, and it requires 10x leveraging which makes available up to \$10 billion for small businesses in California. These funds are primarily used by community banks, minority depository institutions and CDFI loan funds; however, no single continuously updated dashboard is available publishing deployment results.

GARIBAY: Hiring and retaining quality employees remains one of the biggest challenges for small businesses. One of the most effective ways to address this is by building partnerships with school districts, trade schools, and vocational training programs that help connect businesses with future employees. While these partnerships are especially valuable for technical and manufacturing-related industries, workforce training programs are available for a wide range of businesses. Another valuable resource is the America’s Job Center of California (AJCC), which has offices throughout Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. The AJCC provides services such as job fairs, recruiting assistance, resume screening, and interview support, often at little or no cost to employers. For businesses struggling to attract or retain employees, these programs can help reduce hiring costs, improve candidate quality, and connect employers with workforce training resources that support long-term employee development and retention.

YEUNG: From a lender’s perspective, the core challenge today is not simply access to capital but the widening gap between what businesses need and what qualifies as bankable credit. Many small businesses remain operationally strong, but they are facing structural pressure from higher interest rates, compressed margins, and uneven cash flow cycles. As a result, even viable businesses may not meet traditional underwriting thresholds such as DSCR, liquidity, or collateral coverage. At Cathay Bank, we are seeing that the issue is often financial readiness rather than creditworthiness. Many borrowers lack organized financial reporting, forward-looking projections, or a clear capital strategy. This creates friction in the lending

process and delays access to funding. To address this, we believe the solution lies in a combination of better borrower preparation (financial discipline, documentation, and planning); structured lending programs (such as SBA and state guarantees) that bridge the “credit elsewhere” gap; and early advisory engagement between banks and borrowers. Ultimately, the role of the lender as capital provider is evolving to include financial education, helping businesses become bankable—not just fundable.

What emerging legal risks should small businesses be paying attention to in 2026?

LIGHT: Ongoing employment law issues often dominate both small and larger businesses. Often, small businesses don’t understand the HR implications of their actions. Larger businesses with HR departments face class action and PAGA employment law cases. Both types of employers need to tighten up their HR practices. Small businesses need part-time HR consultants and larger businesses (and small) need to conduct routine HR audits; and will get financial credit for doing so if they are subject to a PAGA action.

How have lending conditions evolved for small businesses over the past year, particularly for SBA-backed financing?

GARIBAY: Access to capital remains a major concern for entrepreneurs, especially for businesses that may not qualify for traditional bank financing. Many cities are working to bridge that gap by establishing their own loan programs. The City of Simi Valley invested more than \$1 million to establish a small business loan program. The program provides low-interest loans of up to \$100,000, with a focus on supporting businesses that may have difficulty securing conventional financing. Cities can also help connect businesses with federal and state funding opportunities. Programs funded through Community Develop-



“Successful small-middle sized business relationships with attorneys, accountants, bankers, insurance brokers, and real estate brokers are not just ‘important’ — they are foundational to success.”

—MICHAEL BANNER

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ment Block Grants (CDBG), for example, may support small business loans, façade improvements, or microenterprise assistance. While these programs can involve more documentation and eligibility requirements, they can be extremely valuable for businesses willing to invest the time. City staff can often help business owners identify which programs are the best fit and guide them through the process.

YEUNG: Over the past year, lending conditions have shifted toward a more disciplined and risk-aware environment. While liquidity still exists in the market, lenders are placing greater emphasis on cash flow sustainability, repayment capacity, and downside protection. In SBA lending specifically, we’ve seen a transition from a more flexible, volume-driven approach during the pandemic to a compliance-driven, credit quality-focused framework. Documentation standards, eligibility reviews, and repayment analysis have all become more rigorous. This is a healthy normalization, but it requires both lenders and borrowers to operate with greater precision. From our perspective, this evolution reinforces the importance of a structured underwriting discipline (one that does not rely solely on guarantees), consistency with SBA standard operating procedures and regu-

latory expectations, and balanced risk management, while still supporting small business growth. We also see an opportunity here: SBA and state programs continue to play a critical role in supporting businesses that fall outside conventional credit parameters. The key is to apply these programs responsibly, ensuring both portfolio quality and long-term borrower success.

BARRAGAN: Unfortunately, the SBA Administrator has dictated, with no Congressional authority, that non-US citizens, including permanent residents with valid documentation, can no longer receive SBA 7a and other SBA-supported loans. That arbitrary decision is wreaking havoc in immigrant communities and with long-time owners of small businesses seeking capital to start and expand businesses. Even in cases where long-time permanent residents are minority owners, the businesses are being denied SBA guaranteed lending. Asian, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European as well as Latino entrepreneurs are being denied capital that would spur business expansion and job creation.

What should small business owners do to improve their chances of securing financing from banks or SBA lenders?

YEUNG: One of the most common misconceptions among small business owners is that financing begins with the loan application. In reality, financing begins much earlier—with financial structure, discipline, and planning. From a lender’s standpoint, successful borrowers are those who present a clear, transparent, and well-supported financial story. This includes not only historical performance but also a realistic understanding of cash flow, debt capacity, and business risks. We encourage business owners to approach financing proactively by building clean and consistent financial records; understanding their cash flow and repayment capacity, not just revenue growth; maintaining reasonable leverage and liquidity levels; and engaging with lenders early to structure the transaction appropriately.

At Cathay Bank, we often work with clients well before a formal application is submitted. This advisory approach allows us to guide them in shaping a financing structure that aligns with both SBA requirements and prudent credit standards. In today’s environment, preparation and transparency are the most critical factors in securing financing.

ALVARADO: There are several steps business owners can take to improve their chances of securing financing. Establishing a strong credit profile is foundational and includes paying bills on time, maintaining low credit utilization and proactively addressing any inaccuracies on credit reports. Having a well-developed business plan further strengthens a financing request by demonstrating a clear understanding of the market, supported by thoughtful financial projections and a strategy for growth. Equally important is cultivating an ongoing relationship with a banker who understands both your background and your long-term goals. This relationship adds credibility and can provide meaningful support as your business evolves and financing needs expand.

What types of insurance coverage are most overlooked—but critical—for small businesses today?

LIGHT: Employment practices liability insurance (EPLI) does not automatically come with a general liability policy. Employers often discover they don’t have EPLI when they receive a demand letter on behalf of a former employee. The deductibles have risen dramatically due to the plethora of claims, but it’s still good to have to protect against the potentially catastrophic wrongful termination, harassment or discrimination case. EPLI does NOT cover wage and hour claims, however. Employers can buy an EPLI “rider” that will pay for their attorney fees to defend a wage and hour class action/PAGA or individual claim, but the rider won’t cover the loss or settlement.



File your tax returns and if you are making money, report it. Not reporting to avoid taxes will just make your business un-lendable and a target for the IRS or the state.”

—ROBERTO BARRAGAN



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How can small businesses optimize cash flow in an uncertain economic environment?

ALVARADO: Having a well-structured projection plan that provides an accurate cash flow forecast is especially important. Adopting rolling forecasts that are refreshed monthly or quarterly—paired with scenario planning—helps businesses stay responsive by identifying risks and revealing opportunities across a range of possible economic or environmental shifts that could impact outcomes. I also see a huge value in cross-functional collaboration, as it brings together diverse perspectives from different departments—such as finance, operations, sales and marketing—which can provide insights that significantly improve forecast accuracy. By fostering open communication and sharing data across teams, businesses can identify potential challenges earlier, align strategic priorities and create more realistic, data-driven projections. Another best practice to keep in mind is closely monitoring key performance indicator’s related to payables, receivables and liquidity. These metrics help assess cash flow health and alert business owners to potential problems before they escalate.

What are some creative or alternative financing solutions small businesses should be aware of in today’s market?

BARRAGAN: Small businesses must stay away from Merchant Cash Advances (MCA). These “business loans” allow businesses to borrow against their anticipated sales. MCA providers offer an upfront lump sum payment in exchange for a percentage of future debit and credit card sales. They recoup their payment once your sales cover the initial loan plus fees, with factor rates between 1.08 and 1.25 of the money borrowed, all due in less than six months. So, you might borrow \$50,000 advance with a 1.2% rate, you’ll pay back \$60,000 in less than six months, regardless of sales. That calculates to a more than 20% APR! ICON CDC is seeing more and more businesses that have taken out multiple MCAs and are struggling to keep up with the mounting debt. If it’s not the interest rate that kills you, the short amortization will.

What new local, state or federal tax changes or incentives should small business owners be aware of this year?

GARIBAY: Many cities maintain small business resource pages that outline available incentives, financing programs, workforce grants, and tax-credit opportunities. Businesses planning to expand operations, invest in equipment, or hire additional employees may qualify for assistance depending on the scope of the project. If that applies to your business, don’t hesitate to reach out and ask questions early in the process. Workforce-related programs can be especially valuable. Incentives such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs can help offset hiring and training costs, potentially saving businesses thousands of dollars. Economic development staff can often help connect businesses with the programs best suited to their needs.

How are employment laws evolving, particularly around remote work and gig workers?



For businesses struggling to attract or retain employees, there are programs that can help reduce hiring costs, improve candidate quality, and connect employers with workforce training resources that support long-term development and retention.”

—LUIS GARIBAY

LIGHT: Gig workers, who are the same as independent contractors (ICs), are problematic because California law much prefers employment relationships. Employers must review the rigid “ABC” IC rules to determine if a particular worker qualifies for IC status. Most don’t, and the penalties can be harsh. California law is much more rigid than federal law, so out-of-state or foreign workers may be preferable (unfortunately for California-based workers). Remote employees present problems related to equipment use and reimbursement, as well as travel to their employer’s regular worksite, which may be reimbursable both as to time for hourly workers, and mileage for all such workers.

What role, if any, has philanthropy played in collaboration with deploying capital to small businesses in Los Angeles county?

BANNER: Philanthropy may not have had a significant and multifaceted role in facilitating collaboration and deploying capital to small businesses in Los Angeles County. It remains unclear to me how much philanthropic resources have expended; particularly when it comes to reaching underserved businesses and addressing market gaps. It is well-documented that large, unrestricted grants to non-profit organizations that support technical assistance and borrower readiness or preparation exist. These grants typically give substantial sums directly to organizations working on a wide range of issues, allowing them to use the funds where they are most needed. It remains to be seen if equity-focused mission-related investments will ever receive a significant allocation of philanthropic capital. These risk mitigation resources have long been the domain of government funds; however, new strategies or credit enhancement tools are necessary. In 2018, Milken’s PLUM touched on the need for greater innovation beyond government funding channels. Increased deployment of capital for small and middle-sized companies and non-profit social service providers serving marginalized communities and targeted populations is sorely needed in Los Angeles.

What are the most common financial mistakes small business owners are still making in 2026?

YEUNG: In 2026, many of the financial challenges we see are not due to external conditions alone but rather avoidable structural mistakes in how businesses manage their finances. A recurring



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issue is the use of short-term, high-cost financing to solve long-term capital needs. This creates unsustainable debt burdens and weakens the borrower’s overall credit profile. Additionally, many businesses still operate without a clear separation between personal and business finances, which complicates underwriting and reduces transparency. Another key concern is the lack of forward planning. Businesses often focus on immediate growth opportunities without fully assessing working capital needs, debt service capacity, or economic sensitivity. From our perspective, the solution is not just better financing—but better financial management by aligning financing structure with business purpose (short term vs long term); maintaining disciplined cash flow management; and planning ahead for capital needs rather than reacting to liquidity pressure. As lenders, we are willing to support growth—but only when it is supported by sound financial structure and sustainability.

GARIBAY: One of the most common mistakes we see is businesses signing a lease before fully understanding the city’s permitting and approval requirements. Every city has different zoning regulations, permit processes, and review timelines, so researching those details upfront can save significant time,



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Give employees a summary of the value of all benefits and compensation they receive, so employees see the overall value of labor burden, and not just their basic hourly rate or salary.”

-JONATHAN FRASER LIGHT

money, and frustration later. For example, if a business learns early on that approvals could take several months, that information can help when negotiating lease terms with a property owner or broker. The last thing any business owner wants is to pay rent on a space they cannot yet operate from. Reaching out to city planning, building, or economic development staff early in the process can help identify potential issues and keep projects moving more smoothly.

Who can help bridge the gap for businesses that may not qualify through traditional lending channels?

BARRAGAN: ICON CDC has financial professionals on staff whose job is to package loans, review financial statements and credit reports, and prepare projections to support an application to ICON’s own Small Business Success Fund. Loans up to \$100,000 are available to businesses turned down by banks, at rates of 7-10% over five years. Funds can be used for working capital, tenant improvements, equipment, and vehicle purchase. Startups as well as existing businesses are welcome, as ICON can be more flexible with credit and cash flow requirements. Organizations like Coalition for Responsible Community Development in South Los Angeles and New Economics for Women in East Los Angeles are available as well to connect small businesses to the capital they need.

What are the biggest compliance pitfalls that can quietly cost small businesses over time?

LIGHT: Here are the “Big Five” reasons why an employer is likely to be sued in a class action or PAGA case: 1) meal break violations; 2) rest break violations; 3) rounding time cards for payroll; 4) failure to reimburse for use of personal equipment (e.g., personal phones to clock in/out and two-factor authenti-



cation); and 5) “bonus gross-ups” (failure to include “non-discretionary” bonuses in the calculation of hourly workers’ overtime, meal and rest break premiums, and sick time/PTO, but not vacation time so far).

How can small businesses better prepare financially before seeking funding or expansion capital?

BARRAGAN: File your 2025 tax returns! Banks and lenders don’t want to see extension letters; the only real evidence many small businesses have of business performance is the tax returns. And to borrow money, a business needs to understand that it must make money. Not a lot of money (if you do, good for you), but enough to pay back the bank and a little more. Banks lend against sales and net income. Some banks are lending small amounts against sales, believing that regardless of your reporting, you are making money and can pay them back. The majority of banks lend against net positive income. So, if you are making money, report it. Not reporting to avoid taxes will just make your business un-lendable and a target for the IRS or the state.



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What separates small businesses that are scaling successfully in 2026 from those that are stagnating?

ALVARADO: This ultimately comes down to mindset, discipline and execution. The most successful scaling businesses operate proactively, keeping long-term strategy front and center. Planning and investing early in technology, talent and marketing position companies to be proactive rather than reactive when growth demands it. A strong command of the numbers is equally critical, including maintaining a stable balance sheet and closely monitoring margins, cash flow and key performance metrics to guide decision-making. Leadership also plays a defining role in driving productivity and sustainable growth. Business owners who effectively delegate and empower their teams remove a common obstacle to scaling: trying to do everything themselves. And again, I cannot stress enough the importance of building and maintaining a 60–90day cash reserve and reassess budgets and pricing on a regular basis to stay ahead of situations that could have significant impact on your business.

What role do professional advisors such as bankers, lawyers, accountants, and insurance specialists play in helping small businesses grow responsibly?

BANNER: Successful small-middle sized business relationships with attorneys, accountants, bankers, insurance brokers, and real estate brokers are not just “important” – they are foundational to success. They are primary sources of advice that enhance credibility and ultimately contribute significantly to a business’s ability to be successful. An entrepreneur without a strong network of these professionals is at a disadvantage. A business with an experienced advisor network (“The Holy Grail”) of trusted professionals can often help bridge gaps or

clarify issues during its start up or growth cycle. If a business owner needs to restructure, resolve a legal dispute, prepare financial projections, or understand a complex financial transaction. These experienced team of advisors can leverage their professional network to help their clients get answers to questions, which ultimately facilitates the best possible business decisions. Many larger financial institutions have staffed up with business advisors to help a small and middle-sized business owner navigate within the financial institutions for other specialized services. These new business advisors allow these banker to positions themselves as consultative resource beyond just providing a loan or opening new accounts. This holistic approach strengthens the client relationship and increases loyalty, potentially leading to future banking needs and referrals from the client themselves.

LIGHT: From the human resources perspective, it is essential to have your HR attorney review your policies and procedures periodically to ensure compliance. I always find problems when conducting HR audits. I routinely hear, “I didn’t know that was a law,” even from HR professionals. In addition, always involve the senior operations people in such audits. HR and senior “back-office” management often assume that policies and procedures are being followed in the field or on the manufacturing floor, only to find out from the operations people that, for expediency, efficiency, or personal preference, things aren’t handled properly (meals, rest breaks, clocking, use of personal equipment, etc.).

How can small businesses build stronger relationships with lenders and financial institutions over time?

YEUNG: Strong lender relationships are built over time and are fundamentally based on trust, transparency, and consistency. In today’s credit environment, this relationship is more important than ever. From a bank’s perspective, we do not eval-



“Lending conditions have shifted toward a more disciplined and risk-aware environment. While liquidity still exists in the market, lenders are placing greater emphasis on cash flow sustainability, repayment capacity, and downside protection.”

–LAURENCE YEUNG

uate a borrower based solely on a single transaction—we look at the overall relationship, historical performance, and communication patterns. Businesses that maintain active engagement with their financial institutions are often in a much stronger position when financing needs arise. We encourage business owners to establish a relationship early, before financing is needed; maintain operating accounts and deposit relationships with their bank; communicate regularly about business performance and any potential challenges; and be transparent, especially during periods of stress. At Cathay Bank, we view lending as part of a broader relationship. Clients who consistently engage with us tend to benefit from more efficient processes, better-structured solutions, and stronger long-term support. Ultimately, banks lend not just to financial statements—but to relationships built on credibility and trust.

ALVARADO: Strong relationships with lenders don’t start when you need capital, they’re built over time. Many successful businesses maintain regular communication with their financial



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SMALL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

professionals, sharing updates on performance, strategic goals and even potential challenges well before they arise. Another important factor to consider is to provide clean financials, consistent reporting and a track record of reliability on a routine basis. But it's not just about the numbers. Establishing a genuine relationship with a banker who understands your business and financial objectives means you can have a dedicated advocate to support you when critical needs arise. Rather than viewing your bank as just a service provider for isolated transactions, consider them to be a long-term partner invested in your growth.

How can small businesses better engage with city programs, chambers of commerce, and local partners to support long-term growth?



Adopting rolling forecasts that are refreshed monthly or quarterly — paired with scenario planning — helps businesses stay responsive by identifying risks and revealing opportunities across a range of possible economic or environmental shifts."

-BEN ALVARADO

GARIBAY: One of the best ways is by actively participating in local events and networking opportunities. Most cities host events such as State of the City programs, business roundtables, and special presentations that bring together business owners, city staff, workforce agencies, and community partners in one place. These gatherings create opportunities to make direct connections with the people who administer programs and resources, often leading to new partnerships. Cities also regularly share updates on new initiatives, development projects, and infrastructure improvements that may help businesses identify future opportunities. Many municipalities offer e-newsletters or business update emails that are easy to sign up for online and delivered regularly, giving busy business owners a simple way to stay informed.

How should small businesses balance flexibility (remote/hybrid work) with productivity and culture?

LIGHT: That's a tough one. COVID was the tipping point for remote workers. Those companies that are successful at creating company culture activities and events for remote workers may be most successful in retaining such workers and blending them into the overall company culture. Online group trainings, fun activities, and occasional on-site activities for all workers tend to meld the two groups more effectively. There are now many online resources for such activities and the company should designate an individual or team responsible for regular such interactions.

Looking ahead, what trends do you believe will most impact small businesses in Los Angeles over the next several years?

BANNER: The US economy continues to face many uncer-

tainties. It has been reported that the consumer is still spending and employment opportunities for most remains stable; however, unemployment rates for Blacks and Hispanics is reported to be on the rise and is nearly double that of Whites and Asians. I believe this unemployment trend could produce increased small business startups or business acquisitions. Based on my experience, it is a strong possibility that young Black and Hispanics professionals look to entrepreneurship rather than employment as they have to contend with AI induced job losses and lingering unemployment.

What are the City and County of Los Angeles doing to support small businesses?

BARRAGAN: The City of Los Angeles, through the Economic and Workforce Department, funds 11 BusinessSource Centers (BSC) across the City that focus on financial, micro grants, and technical assistance to small businesses as well as procurement support to businesses seeking government contracts, e.g., LA28 Olympics, FIFA World Cup, Super Bowl. Startup and existing businesses are encouraged to contact a BSC for their expert advice and access to resources. The County, through the Department of Economic Opportunity, provides grants to startup businesses as well as next-level entrepreneurial training to residents countywide. It provides small business assistance through the East Los Angeles Entrepreneur Center and Office of Small Business (OSB). The OSB also certifies small businesses to contract with the many County departments seeking vendor support. What is still needed is city and county-supported small business lending to meet the needs of entrepreneurs seeking capital for a startup or existing business. As above, the biggest obstacle to new business creation as well as existing expansion is the lack of capital available from traditional sources. The City and County can support Community Development Corporations and Community Development Financial Institutions that can make loans to spur business creation and job growth.

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