

ENTREPRENEURS MEETUP

Young leaders gathered to envision a future community that supports small businesses and their owners, employees, and families.

Engaging a diverse range of people and sharing the information, ideas, and perspectives they generate is fundamental to JCF's mission to build a future for Jefferson County where everyone can thrive. This document is part of a series of "knowledge products" designed to broadly share community information being generated through our daily work.

On May 15, 2024, Jefferson Community Foundation hosted an Entrepreneurs Meetup at Marrowstone Vineyards. We wanted to ask small business owners how they envision the next 15-20 years in Jefferson County and how JCF, working with local nonprofits, could help make this a more supportive environment for their growth and success. Over twenty small business owners throughout the county attended. Here are some of the highlights of their discussions along with suggestions for donations that would support their vision.



HOUSING

The greatest concern the entrepreneurs voiced was affordable housing. They believe more low- and mid-range housing options need to be available so that the cost of housing for themselves and their employees can be closer to 30% of household monthly income. Currently, many spend 50% or more of their monthly household income on housing. The following organizations are working on increasing local affordable workforce housing:

[Habitat for Humanity of East Jefferson County](#)

[Bayside Housing and Services](#)

[Olympic Housing Trust](#)

[Housing Solutions Network](#)



PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND SERVICES

Small business owners would like more professional and affordable support in areas such as succession planning, business planning, and strategy development. They welcome more mentors. They would like to lower costs through shared services such as professional staff, tech support and office space. They would like more loan opportunities to be made available. Local organizations working on these issues include:

[EDC Team Jefferson](#)

[Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship](#)

[Local Investment Opportunities Network \(LION\)](#)



BUYING & TRANSPORTING PRODUCTS LOCALLY

There was a robust discussion about encouraging the residents of Jefferson County to buy locally grown or produced items, utilize local service providers, and patronize local businesses, artists, and makers. There is a need for an easier way for local consumers to access these businesses, for example a local sales platform or a common "Made in Jefferson County" brand that could be marketed. Also, they want access to more production and storage spaces along with a broader range of suppliers. Over the last two years, Jefferson Community Foundation and EDC Team Jefferson incubated [Jeffco Created](#), initially founded as the Creative Entrepreneurship Network.