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**FREE REMOTE CHICAGO SMALL BUSINESS EXPO TO CONNECT CURRENT AND FUTURE BUSINESS OWNERS WITH RESOURCES**

*Expo will feature an inspirational keynote address and panel discussions on Thursday, March 27*

**CHICAGO** –Today, Mayor Brandon Johnson and the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) announced the free remote Chicago Small Business Expo will be held on Thursday, March 27th from 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The remote expo serves as a comprehensive resource for Chicago’s small business community, ultimately increasing chances of success and achieving business goals. The expo will feature a series of webinars led by industry experts and government officials offering insights into funding opportunities and growth strategies for current and future business owners. The keynote speaker will be Brenda Palms, President and CEO of the North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) and Sweet Beginnings, LLC. To learn more and register for the free remote Chicago Small Business Expo, visit [Chicago.gov/BizExpo](https://Chicago.gov/BizExpo).

“Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and our administration will continue to empower Chicago businesses through connections to additional resources,” said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “By bringing together experts from across government, this remote expo will serve as a one-stop shop for entrepreneurs looking to start, grow and sustain their businesses.”

The interactive remote expo will cover topics such as:

- Accessing Capital: Funding options and financial resources available to entrepreneurs
- Navigating Government Resources: Available programs, grants and regulatory support at the local, state and federal levels

“BACP supports and licenses businesses, so are uniquely positioned to be a comprehensive resource hub for business owners and entrepreneurs,” said **Ivan Capifali, BACP Acting Commissioner**. “This remote Chicago Small Business Expo will provide attendees with the knowledge and tools they need for their business.”

The keynote speaker will be Brenda Palms, President and CEO of the North Lawndale Employment Network and Sweet Beginnings, LLC. For 25 years, Brenda has led NLEN in the heart of the North Lawndale neighborhood, and Sweet Beginnings two social impact businesses beelove® and the beelove café. Through Sweet Beginnings model of providing transitional employment in beekeeping, honey production, packaging, and customer service, Palms has connected more than 800 job seekers with barriers to employment to good local jobs and a stepping stone to long term prosperity.

“This expo provides a crucial pathway for small business owners to tap into the wealth of resources available to them,” said **Brenda Palms, President and CEO of the North Lawndale Employment Network and founder of Sweet Beginnings LLC.**, and its social impact businesses beelove® and the beelove café. “It’s always an honor to share the sweet lessons and the stings of my social enterprise journey and hoping to inspire and empower fellow entrepreneurs.”

The upcoming expo is sponsored by Western Union, Wintrust Bank and CIBC Bank USA and in partnership with City of Chicago Colleges and the Chicago Treasurer’s Office.

“Western Union is proud to support the remote Chicago Small Business Expo and values the strength that diverse backgrounds bring to creating a thriving and dynamic business community,” said **Mario Hernández, Director of Public Affairs, Western Union.** “This expo is essential in equipping all participants, including immigrant entrepreneurs, with the knowledge and resources needed to succeed in today’s business landscape.”

The Thursday, March 27th remote expo will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The schedule is as follows:

9:00 a.m.: Welcome Address

9:15 a.m.-10:10 a.m.: Maximizing Government Resources for Your Business

10:15 a.m.-10:20 a.m.: Break

10:20 a.m.-11:20 a.m.: Show Me the Money! Funds at the Local Level

11:20 a.m.-11:25 a.m.: Break

11:25 a.m.-12:30 p.m.: Keynote Address

For more information and to register for the free remote Chicago Small Business Expo, visit [Chicago.gov/BizExpo](https://chicago.gov/BizExpo). Follow @ChicagoBACP on social media for updates.

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