

FOUNDERS & FEEDBACK

Activate your community!

Founders and Feedback, hosted by EQALL in partnership with local communities of Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs)—is a strategic, founder-centered initiative designed to uncover gaps in the small business support ecosystem by listening directly to entrepreneurs.

Purpose and Structure

The core intent of Founders and Feedback is to create a space for honest, founder-led dialogue that intentionally excludes local service providers. This exclusion is purposeful: it allows entrepreneurs to speak freely about their experiences without concern for reputational dynamics or institutional defensiveness.

The goal is to surface what's working, what's not, and what's missing in the current landscape of entrepreneurship support.

This activation is typically hosted in a community setting—such as a local hub or roundtable—and brings together founders, changemakers, and ecosystem builders. Founders are invited to share their experiences including challenges around funding access, program effectiveness, and resource gaps.

Themes Emerging from Founders

From the internal communications and planning documents, several recurring themes have emerged:

- **Need for Practical Support:** Founders consistently express a desire for actionable, real-world guidance rather than abstract inspiration. Many feel that ESO programs are too theoretical and not tailored to the realities of small business growth.
- **Capital Access Challenges:** Founders often struggle to access funding and want ESOs to advocate for alternative models and help them become investor-ready.
- **Curriculum Relevance:** There's a call for modernized business education that reflects current market conditions and founder realities, including digital learning and flexible formats.
- **Equity and Policy Advocacy:** Founders want ESOs to play a stronger role in closing racial and gender wealth gaps and holding institutions accountable for equitable access.

EQALL's Role and Philosophy

EQALL positions itself as a neutral connector and strategic facilitator. Its mission is to evolve how entrepreneurship support is designed and delivered, with a focus on accessibility, sustainability, and founder-first frameworks.

EQALL works with municipalities, universities, and ESOs to build capacity, streamline systems, and ensure that support programs are both effective and equitable.

The activation is part of a broader ecosystem-building strategy that could include tools like eShip IQ (a virtual-first incubation program), SuccessSprint (a personalized accelerator), and the podcast All Things Equal, which amplifies ESO voices & perspectives.

Example in Action: Baltimore

The Baltimore edition of the Founders and Feedback activation, hosted by EQALL in partnership with local changemakers, took place at Impact Hub Baltimore.

This session exemplified the activation’s core mission: to create a founder-first space for honest, unfiltered dialogue about the state of entrepreneurship support—without the presence of local service providers.

What Happened in Baltimore

The event was co-organized by Holly Burrow of EQALL, Tabitha Wolod of IEI Agency, and LaQuida Chancey of Smalltimore Homes.

It brought together a diverse group of founders & entrepreneurs for a roundtable-style conversation centered on one key question:

What do founders really need from Entrepreneur Support Organizations?

The session was intentionally designed to be informal and founder-led, allowing participants to speak candidly about their experiences. Topics included:

- Gaps in access to capital and technical assistance
- Frustrations with outdated or overly theoretical programming
- The need for more culturally competent and community-rooted support
- Opportunities for ESOs to listen more and prescribe less
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The feedback gathered during this session is being used to inform future programming and to help EQALL and its partners advocate for more responsive, data-informed support systems.

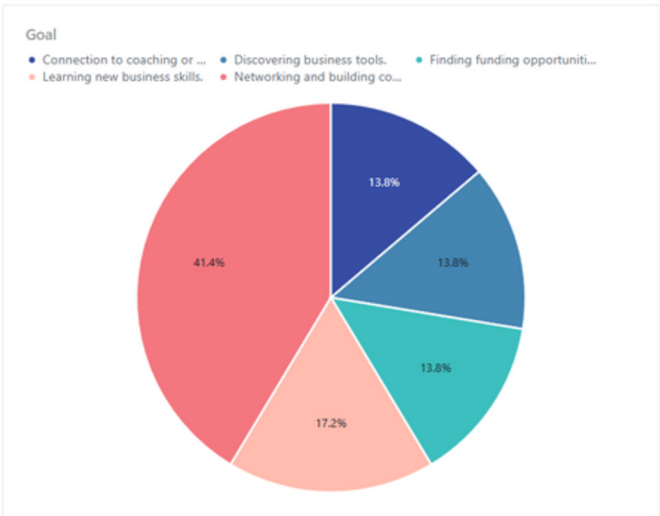
Why Location Matters

Hosting the activation at Impact Hub Baltimore was a strategic choice. As a community-centered coworking and innovation space, Impact Hub offers more than just desks and Wi-Fi—it serves as a catalyst for social innovation and inclusive entrepreneurship. The space is known for:

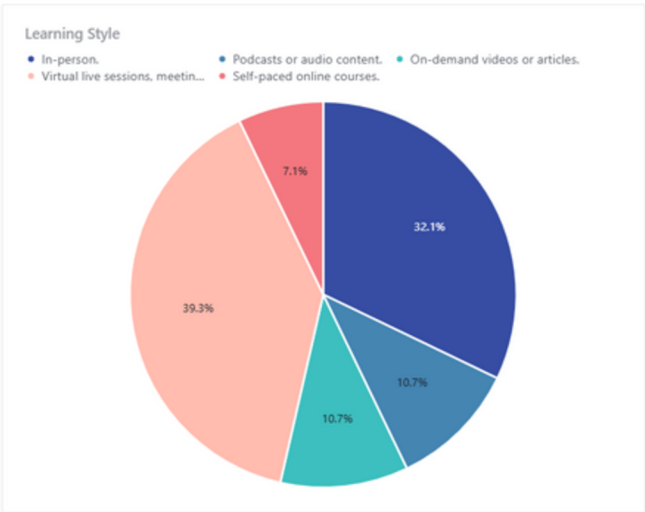
- Supporting underrepresented founders and mission-driven ventures
- Hosting community events, workshops, and accelerators
- Providing a physical and cultural home for Baltimore’s changemakers

By situating the conversation in this environment, EQALL and its partners signaled their commitment to meeting founders where they are—both literally and figuratively.

When you attend events for founder support what are you primarily seeking?



How would you prefer to receive support and knowledge to help grow your business?



When would you prefer to attend business support events?

