



Emerging Entrepreneur Zone (EEZ)

2025 Annual Impact Report

Empowering Wisconsin's Next Generation of Entrepreneurs

Executive Summary

The Emerging Entrepreneur Zone (EEZ) was launched with one clear mission: to empower young adults in Wisconsin with the mindset, skills, and confidence to explore entrepreneurship as a life path. In 2025, EEZ completed its pilot year — a foundational milestone that brought together mentors, students, and community members to create a new kind of learning experience. This report shares our progress, our impact, and our plans to expand opportunities for students across the region in 2026 and beyond.

Program Overview

EEZ is an initiative of Small Business Milwaukee that connects students ages 16 – 25 with professional mentors, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. Through guided sessions, networking events, and certification courses, the program helps students explore their passions, learn real-world business concepts, and develop essential professional skills.

In 2025, EEZ introduced three key certification tracks:

1. Entrepreneurship & Life Path – Helping students discover their unique strengths

and career direction.

2. Professional Soft Skills – Building confidence in communication, teamwork, and workplace professionalism.

3. Networking Mastery for Young Entrepreneurs – Teaching the art of introductions, connections, and relationship building.

2025 Impact by the Numbers

Metric	Total
Students Enrolled	6
Active Mentors	8
Networking Events Held	1
Partner Schools	0 (Pilot Year)
Sponsors	0 (Pilot Year)
Funds Raised	\$0 (Self-Funded Launch)
Student Certifications Earned	Pilot cohort in progress

Highlights & Milestones

- Pilot Networking Event Success – EEZ hosted its first-ever networking event through the Launch program, bringing together 8 mentors, 6 students, and several parents. Students took the lead — running the event, moderating roundtable discussions, and facilitating open networking sessions. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive from both mentors and students, who expressed enthusiasm for future events.

- Foundation Built for Growth – EEZ established essential mentor guidelines, safety procedures, and registration systems to ensure a professional and safe learning environment.

- Community Excitement – Students asked when the next event would be, and mentors expressed interest in volunteering again — a strong sign that the EEZ model is engaging and meaningful.

Spotlight Stories

Student Reflection:

“ Before EEZ, I never thought I could talk to a business owner with confidence. After

our networking night, I felt like I belonged in those conversations. It made me excited about my future. ”

— EEZ Student, 2025 Pilot Cohort

Mentor Perspective:

“ Watching students lead the event and ask real, thoughtful questions reminded me why I became a mentor. EEZ is giving them real experience — not just theory. ”

— EEZ Mentor, Small Business Milwaukee Network

Community Voice:

“ This program gives local youth a chance to see entrepreneurship in action. It ’ s not just about starting a business — it ’ s about learning how to think like a leader. ”

— Community Supporter

Looking Ahead to 2026

The EEZ team is now preparing for a strong 2026 with a clear focus on growth and sustainability. Our next steps include launching three full certification classes, building school partnerships, introducing sponsorship opportunities, expanding the mentor network, and launching the EEZ Alumni Club.

Acknowledgments

EEZ would not exist without the dedication of its mentors, students, and the supportive community around Small Business Milwaukee. A special thank-you to our pilot-year mentors who volunteered their time and energy to make the first EEZ event a success.

Get Involved

Interested in becoming a mentor, sponsor, or school partner?

Visit EEZ.SmallBizMKE.com

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