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## Seminar a chance to learn how to raise capital

Atlanta Business Chronicle - by [Joanna Carabello](#) Contributing Writer

Entrepreneurs need more than a great idea to attract investment capital.

They must know what investors are looking for, be able to effectively pitch their company's potential and, most importantly, find people who can connect them to potential investors.

Unfortunately, for many entrepreneurs, developing those skills and contacts can be daunting.

"They really don't understand the process of raising capital," said Lucy Holifield, director of the Atlanta Urban League's Economic Empowerment Center. "Entrepreneurs usually focus their attention on growing their business, but they also need to establish relationships with the investment community."

To help bridge the information and networking gaps, the EEC is launching an intensive eight-week seminar series.

The weekly seminars, entitled "How to Successfully Raise Investment Capital," will begin Sept. 12 at the Atlanta Urban League.

The program is limited to 20 participants from minority companies with high growth potential that have been in operation at least two years, a competitive advantage and a solid business plan.

Bonny Moellenbrock, one of the seminar instructors and executive director of the nonprofit **SJF Advisory Services**, said getting access to capital providers and then capturing their attention is one of the biggest challenges entrepreneurs face.

"It is critical to have a good 'elevator pitch' that catches the attention of investors. ... Talking with

equity investors is different than talking to a bank. The future opportunity is as important, even more so, than current cash flow," Moellenbrock said.

The next hurdle is explaining how that investment will generate an attractive return, said Mark Wilson, another instructor and president and CEO of **Ryla Teleservices**.

"You have to have a firm grasp on the numbers to make them feel that you know what you're talking about," Wilson said. "Detail is the key."

Holifield said the seminars' true benefit will be in hands-on experience and advice from experts.

Participants will get one-on-one help refining their business plan as well as regular opportunities to practice their presentations and investment pitches.

And participants could finish the course with something just as powerful as knowledge: references.

Holifield said the teaching partners are not only volunteering their instruction time, but they've also agreed to play matchmaker if they believe someone is ready to meet with potential investors.

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