

Ohio's Largest Black-owned Business Newspaper

FREE



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Ronda Watson Barber—Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

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Advocating, Informing and Promoting Small & Minority Owned Businesses since 2009

# Take the OhioMBE & Ohio Black Card Shopping Challenge

*Spend at least \$50 with a  
Black Business this Holiday Season*



**Be Intentional - Buy Black**





## Partnership With Ohio State, Legal Aid Society, Result in Criminal Record-Sealing Platform

*Opportunity Port will remove barriers to record sealing and promote equitable access to jobs and housing*

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Ronda Watson Barber,  
Editor-in-Chief & Publisher  
www.OhioMBE.com  
rbarber@ohiombe.com

P.O. Box 533  
Granville, OH 43023  
912-290-2112

news@ohiombe.com

OhioMBE welcomes letters to the editor from readers. Typed letters of 350 words or less are preferred. Each letter must include name, home address and daytime phone number. Some letters may appear on our website.

Opportunity Port, an initiative of the office of Columbus City Councilmember [Rob Dorans](#), will begin assisting eligible Franklin County residents with criminal record sealing applications starting Wednesday, December 1, 2021. The initiative was a [finalist](#) in the 2020 Alliance for the American Dream competition sponsored by The Ohio State University in partnership with Schmidt Futures, a philanthropic endeavor by Google founder Eric Schmidt, to provide support for charitable, educational, and commercial efforts with a public purpose.

"This potentially life-changing opportunity will help move more Columbus residents into the middle class," said Councilmember [Dorans](#). "We're aiming to give people their lives back, with a system that's easy to use, and the legal support needed to seal their records."

Opportunity Port's [online survey](#) takes just five minutes to complete, after which an applicant can select a service provider to assist them with their application. Those initial conversations take place over the phone and completed applications are then prepared for submission to either the Franklin County Municipal Court or Franklin County Court of Common Pleas. Service providers for Opportunity Port include the Franklin County Municipal Court Self Help Resource Center, the Legal Aid Society of Columbus, and Equality Ohio.

One in three adults in the U.S. has a criminal record which can make it difficult to obtain the resources such as employment, housing, or federal students loans. Under Ohio law, people who meet certain eligibility criteria can have specific criminal records sealed to prevent employers, landlords and other members of the general public from accessing this information. Record sealing has been shown to improve employment opportunities, increase wages by 25% on average within one year, and reduce a person's chances of re-

*See Opportunity on page 7*

### Got your Black Card?



The Ohio Black Card was introduced at the 7th annual OhioMBE Awards, hosted by the Columbus Zoo & Aquarium. Attendees of the networking luncheon received Ohio Black Cards.

The Ohio Black Card and its mobile app have the mission of fostering business between Black-owned companies.

The mobile app features the electronic copy of OhioMBE, a business directory, a list of contracting opportunities, a collection of upcoming events, business resources and a bevy of vendors who will offer a discount when presented with the Ohio Black Card.

The Ohio Black Card mobile app is available on Google Play. It will be available for Apple users soon.

Don't have THE Ohio Black Card? Visit [OhioBlackCard.com](#) and get yours. The card is FREE. If you are a business who wants to be an Ohio Black Card vendor,

please email [news@ohiombe.com](mailto:news@ohiombe.com)

# publisher's note

Who will advocate for LEDE vendors?

by Ronda Watson Barber  
OhioMBE Publisher

I was saddened and concerned about the Columbus School Board election that James Ragland recently lost. James was a champion for LEDE vendors. During board meetings, he challenged the state's largest public school district on its purchasing practices with disadvantaged businesses. He was a vocal advocate for Black businesses. In his absence who will advocate for LEDE and Black-owned businesses?

Two of the three endorsed democrats and incumbents, Ramona Reyes and Michael Cole, rarely if ever publicly question why the district doesn't meet its mandated purchasing goal of 20 percent or even speak on the district's purchasing inclusion policy.

Ironically, in his day job, Cole is charged with assisting a majority construction company with meeting the State's EDGE requirements on an Ohio State University construction project. Why don't his efforts and commitment to disadvantage and Black-owned businesses continue with his elected position?

Why did the endorsed trio receive the Franklin County Democrats' backing? Do Black-owned businesses matter to the Franklin County Democrats?

One board member, Carol Beckerle during a recent public meeting called the program by a different name. The inclusion program has been known for years as the L.E.D.E. program. She called it the lead program. I was listening to the board meeting and working. For a minute or two, I thought she was referencing "lead pipes" until she mentioned the Outreach Coordinators' name. No one corrected her. It's a bit difficult to support a program if you don't know its name. When James was talking about the LEDE program during the meetings, did she know what he was speaking about? There appears to be a disconnect. Is the board on the same page when talking about district programs designed to establish and sustain diversity, inclusion and equity.

I will continue to question the district's purchasing mission and motives; particularly where disadvantaged businesses and Black businesses are concerned. Why isn't the district actively incorporating disadvantaged businesses in its purchasing scheme? The district has a race-neutral certification program. Businesses that participate in the Local Economically Disadvantaged Enterprises (LEDE) program have a net worth less than \$750,000 not counting their primary residence and investment in the company. The

business must be in Franklin County or 50 percent of the employees must reside in the district. The business must be in operation for at least one year.

The district has an equity policy as it pertains to LEDE companies but has no guidelines to back them up. The demoted COO, Maurice Oldham held his position for many years and never established guidelines for the program. Additionally, when he was the Custodial Supervisor, he didn't meet the LEDE goals for his department.

The policy reads: *The Board affirms its commitment to its "Equity Policy." The School District seeks to include LEDEs in all aspects of its contracting for construction, professional and non-professional services and procurement of goods and supplies activities by adopting this statement (this "LEDE Statement"). Specifically, this LEDE Statement seeks to achieve the goal of awarding to LEDEs School District contracts and procurements which represent at least twenty percent (20%) of all dollars spent on an annual basis by the School District for contracting and procurement purposes (the "LEDE Participation Goal"). The School District is committed to ensuring that all citizens and/or lawfully admitted permanent residents in the School District community who are qualified contractors, subcontractors, professionals, suppliers, and other service providers have a fair and equitable opportunity to participate in the contracting and procurement activities of the School District.*

Again, are those that are charged with procuring goods and services doing their best to include Black businesses? Last school year, 32 Black companies received \$8.7 million in procurement while eight white companies received \$9 million in contracts. Columbus City Schools spent 16 percent of its \$121,808,261.92 spend with LEDE companies. Are Black LEDE businesses getting procurement scraps, while white firms get more lucrative contracts?

Are there purchasing policies enacted to prevent Black-owned businesses from becoming a vendor with the district? Columbus City Schools is the only public entity in Central Ohio to require vendors to have general liability insurance to register as a vendor. This practice was enacted by the former purchasing director who sued the district because they didn't rehire him after he retired and won a \$70,000 settlement (more in the next issue on that hot mess, as I am the only one in the lawsuit who didn't sign a confidentiality clause).

The district will not forward bid notices to vendors who

*See Publisher on page 7*

# 2021 OhioMBE Awards Spotlight

## Passion8 Event Management received the 2021 OhioMBE Top MBE honor

Passion8 specializes in Entertainment & Sporting events. We manage events from a cultural, and comprehensive platform. Identifying trends within each clients industry, we then cultivate those trends through live events. We provide significant time and cost savings for your organization, while simultaneously elevating the event experience for everyone involved.

Devin Joyce is the Founder and CEO of Passion8 Event Management. She is an inspirational Event Producer with 5 years of experience and impact. Devin is a “change agent”. One that impacts a person’s worldview, and perception — in her case, changing the way traditional events are presented to the consumer.

Based in Cleveland, OH Passion8 works on events for The Grammys, BET Awards, NBA All Star, etc.

Devin can be reached at [INFO@PASSION-8.COM](mailto:INFO@PASSION-8.COM)



## Home Commercial Inspections awarded Top MBE at 2021 OhioMBE Awards

The go to person for when you are on the market for a property, James Jones is a master inspector specializing in residential and commercial properties. He is the Founder of Home & Commercial Inspections LLC, an organization established with the principal intention to link buyers and sellers to professionals in the property condition assessment space.

James’ professional journey started in 1998 working in construction. From the humble beginnings of acquiring hands-on experience in HVAC/Refrigeration, residential building and remodeling, he steadily transitioned to commercial construction to become a Sr. Estimator/ Project Manager. Tapping from his strong knowledge of the construction industry and his invaluable drive and commitment, James established Home & Commercial Inspections LLC to help people avoid the mistakes that are too easily made when buying real estate. With over 21 years’ experience in the construction industry, James is able to assess a structure that may become your home or business and give you straightforward information.

James’ personal and professional skills make him his clients’ most trusted advisor and consultant for when prop-

erty investment decisions

are concerned. He is a qualified Commercial/ Residential Thermographer with American Society of Home Inspections holding a Master Inspectors license. With

James, you are assured of a profes-

sional that works in your best interests. He has spent time as a general contractor, master carpenter and HVAC technician and has the skills as well as the practical experience to provide clients with a thorough property inspection that goes beyond identifying surface level problems.

Serving in his Founder/Owner capacity at Home & Commercial Inspections LLC, James leads a team of industry professionals, all of whom are well versed in areas of residential and commercial construction. The team of experts can assess your dream investment and present you with



See Jones on page 10

# bid opportunities

To post a bid notice, call 614-522-9122 or email [news@ohiombe.com](mailto:news@ohiombe.com)



Columbus City Schools issues solicitations on a regular basis for goods & services related to food, construction, technology, curriculum, & transportation. Interested vendors should periodically check our website at

<http://www.columbus.k12.oh.us/rfp>



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JOHN GLENN COLUMBUS INTERNATIONAL  
AIRPORT



Kokosing Construction  
Co., Inc. is preparing a  
bid for the CRAA-Hold

Pad for Runway 28L Taxilane Rehabilitation at the John Glenn Columbus International Airport. We are seeking quotes for any portion of the project listed that you are qualified to perform or provide supplies, which includes the following:

Asphalt Pavement Removal, Joint and Crack Repair, Concrete Pavement Repairs, Asphalt Pavement Milling, Asphalt Paving, Pavement Markings, Seeding, Lighting/Electrical, Asphalt Seal Coat, and Erosion and Sediment Controls.

Copies of the bidding documents can be obtained from the B2GNow website, <https://columbusairports.diversitycompliance.com/>; Key Blueprints, 614-228-3285, [www.keycompanies.com](http://www.keycompanies.com) or viewed at F.W. Dodge, The Columbus Regional Airport Authority, The Builders Exchange or at 6235 Westerville Rd., Westerville, OH 43081. Please submit quotes to Ryan Davis via e-mail at [rad@kokosing.biz](mailto:rad@kokosing.biz) by 4:00 p.m., December 15th, 2021 or fax at 740-927-9227. Mr. Davis may be contacted at 740-497-8966.

“Kokosing Construction Company is an equal opportunity employer.”

The Columbus Regional Airport Authority values diversity and inclusion and the impact small and minority-owned firms have on the Central Ohio economy. The Columbus Regional Airport Authority invites you to access the following

link: [www.columbusairports.diversitycompliance.com](http://www.columbusairports.diversitycompliance.com) to register to do business with us and to view new bid opportunities and results.

Email [BusinessDiversity@ColumbusAirports.com](mailto:BusinessDiversity@ColumbusAirports.com) for questions about the Diversity Programs at Columbus Regional Airport Authority.



## Columbus City Schools seeks LEDE vendors

### How do I become a Local Economically Disadvantaged Enterprise (LEDE) Vendor with Columbus City Schools?

Your Columbus City Schools Vendor Number allows you to conduct business with the School District.

You must first complete the CCS Vendor Application by visiting: [www.columbus.k12.oh.us](http://www.columbus.k12.oh.us).

Click VENDORS and complete the On-Line Vendor Registration and provide all pertinent information or by contacting the district's Purchasing Department at: (614) 365-5820.

Once registered as a Vendor with Purchasing, please complete the Local Economically Disadvantaged Enterprise (LEDE) Vendor Affidavit also on the district's website. This form must be Signed and Notarized. You can also contact the Outreach Office at: (614) 365-8732 or [outreachservices@columbus.k12.oh.us](mailto:outreachservices@columbus.k12.oh.us)



**You must never be fearful  
about what you are doing  
when it is right.—Rosa Parks**

# OhioMBE.com

# bid opportunities

To post a bid notice, call 614-522-9122 or email [news@ohiombe.com](mailto:news@ohiombe.com)



## City of Columbus – Department of Development

The Department of Development is looking for diverse vendors and contractors who are licensed with the City of Columbus working in the following areas:

- **Graffiti Removal.** Contact Eric Voorhees (614-645-7934 or [eavorhees@columbus.gov](mailto:eavorhees@columbus.gov)).
- **Grass Cutting and Solid Waste Removal.** Contact Mike Schwab (614- 645-7122 or [mfschwab@columbus.gov](mailto:mfschwab@columbus.gov)).
- **Demolition and Asbestos Abatement.** Contact Mike Farrenkopf (614- 679-5873 or [ormlfarrenkopf@columbus.gov](mailto:ormlfarrenkopf@columbus.gov)) or Seth Brehm (614-645-5659 or [swhbrehm@columbus.gov](mailto:swhbrehm@columbus.gov)).
- **Mowing, Property Maintenance, and Miscellaneous Services.** Contact Audrea Hickman (614-645-8907 or [aehickman@columbus.gov](mailto:aehickman@columbus.gov)).
- **Construction trades including: General Construction, Home Improvement, Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing, and Lead Abatement.** Contact Tim Tilton (614- 724-3009 or [twilton@columbus.gov](mailto:twilton@columbus.gov)).

To register for notifications on upcoming bid opportunities, please visit <http://vendors.columbus.gov/sites/public>.

### Franklin County Engineer Upcoming 2021 Construction Projects

#### Highway Projects

- Eureka Ave, Valley View Dr, Highland Ave, & Harper Ave, **Apr 2021**
- Ormond Ave Drainage Part II, **Apr 2021**

#### Resurfacing Projects

- 50 E. Mound St Parking Lot, **Apr 2021**
- Franklin County Resurfacing Program, **May 2021**
- Township Resurfacing Program, **May 2021**
- Franklin County Maintenance & Safety Program, **May 2021**

#### Drainage Projects

- Cook Tri-County Ditch **Oct 2021**
- Kropp Road Drainage Outlet Improvements **Dec 2021**
- 2022 Drainage Maintenance **Nov 2021**

#### Bridge Projects

- Aglers Rd over Alum Creek **Nov 2021**
- Borror Rd over Tributary of Strader Ditch, **May 2021**
- Hoover Rd over Tributary of Grant Run, **May 2021**
- Olentangy River Rd 11.40 & 11.62 Culverts, **Jun 2021**
- Schleppi Rd over Tributary of Rocky Fork Creek, **May 2021**
- 2022 Bridge Maintenance **Nov 2021**

For more information visit

[www.franklincountyengineer.org/future-projects/](http://www.franklincountyengineer.org/future-projects/)  
<https://www.bidexpress.com/businesses/28582/home?agency=true>



**Cornell R. Robertson, P.E., P.S.**  
FRANKLIN COUNTY ENGINEER  
FRANKLIN COUNTY DRAINAGE ENGINEER



\*The dates listed above are projected dates to advertise\*

(Continued from page 2)

arrest, so much so that those with a sealed record are less likely to commit a crime than the general population.

Historically, Franklin County record sealing uptake has been low. According to the 2020 Annual Report of the Franklin County Municipal Court Clerk's Office, only 1,582 applications were filed in 2020, and only 2,011 applications were filed in 2019. However, the Drug Enforcement & Policy Center at The Ohio State University estimates that over 300,000 individuals with cases at the Franklin County Municipal Court may currently be eligible for record sealing.

The Ohio State Legislature voted to expand record sealing eligibility in 2020 and the new law went into effect in April 2021.

"Reentry services are critical to uplifting communities disproportionately impacted by a criminal record, and [Opportunity Port](#) was designed to make the process easier," said Councilmember [Dorans](#). "Not only does Opportunity Port remove barriers for clients, but it also allows pro bono volunteers to help clients from anywhere. And with more people expected to become eligible for record sealing, Opportunity Port will help our legal community meet the demand here in Columbus and Franklin County."

To learn more about Opportunity Port, visit [opportunityport.org](http://opportunityport.org) or contact the program by emailing [info@opportunityport.org](mailto:info@opportunityport.org).

If you are an attorney and interested in serving record sealing applicants through Opportunity Port, contact Hannah Miller, Program Manager, at [info@opportunityport.org](mailto:info@opportunityport.org).

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don't have a current W-9 and general liability insurance on file.

Are LEDE businesses at the forefront of thought when purchasing decisions are made? Why is legislation forwarded to the elected board without LEDE participation? Why does the elected board vote for legislation that does not include LEDE participation? Former Board President Stephanie Hightower earned the tough reputation of sending the legislation back, if it didn't include LEDE businesses. She demonstrated her commitment to the inclusion program and local businesses.

We are told to use our vote to make changes. The changes in the Columbus City School Board may be a continued detriment to Black companies. What are the next steps? How do we get the Columbus School Board to live up to its policy of purchasing inclusion when it is not an issue of importance to them?

Just my thoughts...rwb

## What is One Online Business Idea You Can Start with No Money?

To help enterprising entrepreneurs generate business ideas, we asked business leaders and CEOs for their best ideas. From web designing to social media marketing, there are several suggestions that may help you start an online business with no funding to begin your entrepreneurial journey.

Here are 10 online business ideas you can launch with no capital:

- Leverage Your Technical and Creative Skills in Web Design
- Help Businesses in Your Industry as a Consultant
- Get Your Start in Online Retail
- Start a Virtual Assistant Service
- Use Your Website for Affiliate Marketing
- Offer Sitting Services Online
- Monetize Your SaaS Idea
- Sell Paid Online Courses
- Become a Social Media Influencer
- Use Your Eye for Graphic Design

**Leverage Your Technical and Creative Skills in Web Design.** Freelance web design may be an excellent path for you if you are a creative, digital expert who thrives on developing the layout, visual theme, font set, and color palette of a website. You may study the fundamentals of web design and grasp the tools you'll need for success, such as Adobe XD, Chrome DevTools, and text editor software, even if you have no prior expertise.

Take advantage of your technical and creative skills to help business owners to expand their internet presence. Create a thorough portfolio, then showcase it on your website to attract a constant supply of clients  
-Alisha Taylor, Alisha Taylor Interiors

**Help Businesses in Your Industry as a Consultant .** People always need help and advice, and if you've got experience in a certain field, why not offer them your expertise as a consultant? There are no startup costs with consulting.

All you need to get started are your experience and skill set. Who you're able to consult for depends on your background, but I guarantee there are those in your field who could benefit from your help.  
-Vicky Franko, Insura

**Get Your Start in Online Retail.** If you want to sell something, make sure you understand how to start a home-based business, have a space to store your items, and create an online account with the post office to

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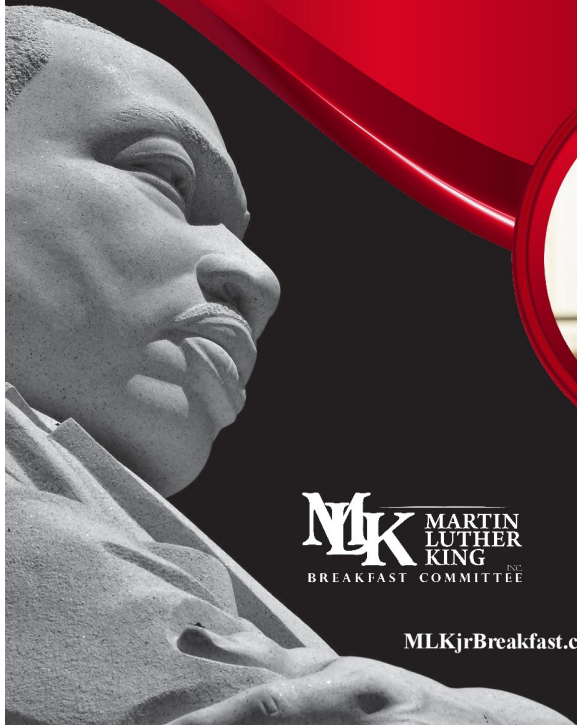
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 *We must cease being participants in our own oppression— Stacey Abrams*

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make mailing as streamlined as possible. Begin researching platforms that make selling online simple. To start, you might want to look into BigCommerce, Wix, Shopify, and Weebly

-Lior Abady, Boho Magic

**Start a Virtual Assistant Service.** There's no shortage of business owners, parents, leaders, and more with full schedules. With solid time management skills and a knack for organization, you're primed to lend a (virtual) helping hand. When starting off, consider focusing on one segment so that you can grow your skills and distinguish yourself from others.

You can assist entrepreneurs running e-commerce sites, real estate agents managing multiple clients, or marketing firms in need of support. The client options are vast. So dust off that resume and start reaching out to see who could benefit from your services.

-Claire Routh, Markitors

**Use Your Website for Affiliate Marketing.** If you already have an established website, joining an affiliate program, such as Amazon, can give you a significant silent income boost. Anyone can do this by selling products that are connected to their niche — in our case — diving equipment. Monetizing your website in this way gives you a decent ROI without the headache of the majority of the hard work involved.

-Alain Sobol, Red Sea Diving College

**Offer Sitting Services Online.** You can start a pet, baby, or house sitting service online as a way of making extra money. There are numerous websites online where you can register as a sitter for free. Such sites will connect you to clients looking to pay for sitting services. You do not require extensive experience for these jobs, and the hourly rate for sitting services is often higher than the average minimum hourly wage.

-Patrick Crane, Love Sew

**Monetize Your SaaS Idea.** You do not need much money to start a SaaS (software as a service) business as long as you're able to put together a sufficient website. Software is all online, so you wouldn't be developing a tangible product.

There are many tools in the world (including ours!) that can help you put together a great product even if you don't know how to code. This is a good way to start a business without a lot of money, especially if you have a great SaaS idea that you've thought through in terms of filling a gap in the market so that people will want to use it frequently.

-Joaquín Roca, Minerva

**Sell Paid Online Courses.** I've seen a lot of people sell

*Jones from page 4*

straightforward information. Not limiting their services to making recommendations for repairs that should be completed prior to residential or commercial purchase, they take the extra initiative to outline the repairs your property is likely to need over the next few years, that way clients can always avoid any surprises and know exactly what to expect.

Cognizant to the fact that purchasing a residential or commercial property is one of the biggest investments one can make, that it can take a lifetime to pay off a mortgage, and that structural repairs can easily cost several months of wages; no one should have to be stuck with a property that is both expensive to pay for and beyond their means to repair. This is James' motivation towards ensuring that clients have all the right information before making the decision to purchase a home or commercial property.

Contact James at 800-241-0133

their online courses without even creating a website. You can start selling your courses or services directly from social media handles by creating an audience. I believe it is the easiest way to earn some money online. While covering this topic, I would recommend beginners avoid surveys and ad-clicking sites as they are not sustainable for long-term earnings.

Take your skill and create a guide, course, or how-to e-book and start selling it to your audience online. The process will take some time, but you can create a reliable online business with this strategy.

-Lynda Fairly, NumLooker

**Become a Social Media Influencer.** Social media marketing is an online business idea that anyone can start even with no money. Netizens who position themselves as influencers earn monetarily from their social media platforms through "likes," "shares," and subscriptions for their entertaining content.

Social media influencers can significantly promote products and services only through a stable internet connection and reliable mobile phone. Businesses realize how effective social media marketing is, and they reach out to influencers for brand partnerships and to improve brand awareness of their offerings.

-Michelle Ebbin, JettProof

**Use Your Eye for Graphic Design.** Graphic design is a reputable online business that you can establish, even without shelling out capital.

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# Ohio Diversity Network

Thursday, December 2, 2021 at 11:30am [Get an SBA Loan – to Start Your Business](#)

Friday, December 3, 2021 at 11:00am [PRiMR: The Three R's of Disaster Preparedness for Businesses](#)

Saturday, December 4, 2021 at 12:00pm [Licking County Library Winterfest](#)

Saturday, December 4, 2021 at 12:00pm [Toys for Tots Toy Drive](#)

Monday, December 6, 2021 at 10:00am [Economic Empowerment Center at the Urban League \(Cincinnati\) – Small Business Cyber Security Best Practices](#)

Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 11:00am [Increase Diversity – Certification 101](#)

Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 11:00am [Increase Diversity: Make Your Website Work for You](#)

Saturday, December 11, 2021 at 11:00am [Zora House – WoCo Holiday Market](#)

Saturday, December 11, 2021 at 12:00pm [Independence, OH Pop Up Shop](#)

Friday, December 17, 2021 at 10:00am [Cleveland SBA: How to Sell Your Product or Service to the Federal Government](#)

*(Continued from page 10)*

If you have a good eye for design, a creative mind that produces excellent visual content, and a reliable computer and internet connection, graphic design can become your bread and butter.

There is real money in being a graphic designer. On average, US graphic designers earn about \$50,000 every year for their talent and skills.

-Johannes Larsson, Entrepreneur

Source: [www.score.org](http://www.score.org)



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