

Subject: AED – Small Business Resources

**FY 2022 Proposed Budget
Budget Work Session Follow-up**

4/9/2021

The following information is provided in response to a request made by Mr. Dorsey at the work session on 3/11/2021, regarding the following question:

Is AED equipped (resource wise) to help small businesses get access to and interpret trend and customer sentiment data and other analyses that may help them weather the "new normal."

Market research is critical for small businesses and nonprofit organizations. It allows them to make strategic pandemic recovery decisions based on the present facts facing their industries. Unfortunately, access to market research tools is cost prohibitive for many small businesses and entrepreneurs. Typically for a small business to find corporate data in the private sector, they would need to spend between \$2,500 - \$5,000 for data.

The County currently helps small businesses overcome this challenge with free resources and programming through Arlington Economic Development (AED) and Arlington Public Library (APL). AED's base budget includes funding for a limited number of private data sources (CoStar and ESRI), allowing AED to provide some aggregate market data to the small business community. In addition, the County collaborates with the APL Business Librarian to provide access to APL's databases that are accessible via a patron's library card. While these resources (paired with one-on-one support) are helpful, BizLaunch staff frequently get requests for in-depth market information that surpasses the capacity of our existing resources. This demand has intensified within the past year as small businesses seek to navigate the "new normal."

If additional FY 2022 Budget funds become available through the budget process or through the administration of the proposed COVID-19 Contingent, AED recommends the County purchase additional databases, specifically Statista, IBISWorld, and DemographicsNOW. These new and more targeted databases would be valuable tools in the County's small business recovery toolbox – allowing businesses to access more up-to-date information and deeper industry and consumer insights. In total, these tools would cost approximately \$40,000 per year (ongoing). As part of their COVID-19 response efforts, neighboring jurisdictions have increased their access to business databases recognizing the need to increase business intelligence to help small businesses recover.

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If the County purchased new market research sources, AED, through its BizLaunch program, would work with business owners to assist them in utilizing these business intelligence resources to navigate the constantly changing business landscape. AED would continue to collaborate with the APL Business Librarian to provide one-on-one appointments for entrepreneurs and would work with APL to allow the databases to be accessible via a patron's library card. These new resources would be a substantial update to the [collection's current offerings](#).