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Contact Information:

Emily Becker, Community Relations Manager

Mid-Continent Public Library

ebecker@mymcpl.org | 816.503.4187



## Applications Now Open for ‘FoodBizCon Pitch Competition’

### Local Food Businesses Can Compete for Cash Prizes at March 6 Event

Kansas City, MO – Applications are now open for Mid-Continent Public Library’s [FoodBizCon Pitch Competition](#), which will be held on **March 6, 2026**, at the K-State Olathe Campus (22201 W Innovation Dr, Olathe, KS) as part of Kansas City’s annual [Food Business Conference](#), a two-day conference offering educational workshops and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs. The conference provides specialized expertise on topics related to mobile food businesses, manufacturing, restaurants, and agriculture.

Made possible by funding from the Kauffman Foundation, MCPL’s Square One Small Business Center will facilitate the Pitch Competition, which will give local food entrepreneurs the opportunity to win cash prizes for their innovative business ideas. Those interested in competing **must fill out an [application on the Library’s website](#) by January 16**, and a group of six finalists will be selected to make their final pitch at the event in March. The top three winners, chosen by the audience and a panel of judges, will walk away with a cash prize. This is a bilingual event, so Spanish speakers are encouraged to apply.

“Our first pitch competition this fall was a tremendous success,” said Ashley Muffitt, Square One Director. “Competitors did an incredible job at outlining their business ideas, and even those who didn’t walk home with cash prizes, gained the opportunity for networking and real-time feedback from local business experts. We look forward to seeing the unique and innovative proposals from food businesses during this next ‘Shark Tank’ style pitch competition!”

**The top three winners will be selected by the panel of judges and will receive \$5,000, \$3,000, and \$1,000, respectively.** The panel will be made up of bilingual business and entrepreneurial leaders. In order to qualify for the Pitch Competition, applicants must be operating a licensed, food-based business in the Kansas City metro area, earning between \$250 and \$100,000 in gross annual revenue.

This past September, MCPL’s Square One held its first Pitch Competition, and Rasheedah Villarreal, founder of Social Emotional Yoga with Mrs. V, came in first place. Her prize money was used to expand her program, which works to build resilience and emotional regulation, particularly among youth. In second place was

Frankie Elder-Reedy, founder of Wrax, a company that produces sports bras that seek to eliminate bounce during workouts.

“Participating in the Square One Pitch Competition was incredibly affirming and motivating,” said Villarreal. “It reminded me that the work we’re doing at Social Emotional Yoga with Mrs. V is both impactful and deeply needed, and the feedback and funding pushed me to think more strategically about growth, sustainability, and creating additional income streams. New additions are coming soon, and Square One played a meaningful role in that momentum.”

In conjunction with the 2026 FoodBizCon Pitch Competition, Square One is also presenting a series of programs to help prepare for this event, including How to Successfully Pitch Your Food Biz and Cómo Presentar con Éxito tu Negocio de Alimentos on Zoom. These are not required for finalists to attend but are provided to assist throughout and are open to the public.

**Learn more about the 2026 FoodBizCon Pitch Competition, including how to submit your business idea, at [mymcpl.org/Square-One](https://mymcpl.org/Square-One).**

*This initiative was made possible by a generous grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.*

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#### **About Mid-Continent Public Library**

Founded in 1965, [Mid-Continent Public Library](https://mymcpl.org) is the largest library system in the Kansas City metropolitan area, operating 34 branches and two Library-To-Go locations and serving approximately 850,000 people in Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties. MCPL is an award-winning library system that strives to enrich citizens and communities through expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration. Connect with the Library on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/mymcpl) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/mymcpl).