

Stoke Denton and Small Business Development Center–Denton Comparison

Similarities and Differences

Both Stoke Denton and SBDC–Denton seek to assist entrepreneurs and small business owners in the startup, launch, and growth of successful businesses. Both organizations are funded in part by the City of Denton.

SBDC–Denton’s one-on-one counseling services are provided free of charge, while Stoke Denton charges membership fees at different levels. However, Stoke Denton’s members gain access to a physical location for entrepreneurs in the form of coworking and dedicated space, something which is not available at SBDC–Denton. This allows for the formation of a community of like-minded peers and the potential for “organic collisions” of members who can form relationships and support, encourage, and advise each other due to physical proximity. Stoke Denton membership also allows access to the structured mentorship program offered at Stoke Denton. With a roster of 20 mentors with knowledge in business planning, law, finance, investing, and marketing, the mentorship program connects Stoke members with volunteers willing to share their own experience and expertise on an ongoing basis. This type of mentorship program is not available at SBDC–Denton.

As an established national program backed by the federal government, the SBDC has a known track record of success. SBDC–Denton has existed for almost 30 years, while Stoke Denton just began operations in August 2016. Stoke Denton could itself be considered an entrepreneurial venture, one that is intended to support entrepreneurship and innovation and foster the growth of new technology companies. Now is the time to establish baseline metrics by which to judge its success.

For specifics about both Stoke Denton and SBDC–Denton, please see the sections below.

Stoke Denton

The Dallas Entrepreneur Center (DEC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was created to help entrepreneurs start, build, and grow companies through education, mentorship, and community. The DEC functions as a business support hub for entrepreneurs by offering the knowledge and resources necessary for success – it provides a physical location with direct access to tools, education, guidance, and like-minded peers. It has replicated its operating model in nine locations, including Stoke Denton. The City of Denton entered into a Management Agreement with the DEC for Stoke Denton in October 2015.

Stoke Denton operates on a membership model. Memberships are offered with price points and benefits that are designed to meet the needs of businesses at different phases of development.

Membership levels are:

- Virtual (\$75/month)
 - Access to Stoke-coordinated events, mentors, and members-only opportunities; two co-working or conference room bookings per month; access to the online member platform
- Coworking (\$20/day or \$150/month)

- M-F 8 a.m.-5 p.m. access; community desks; high-speed internet access; printer/copier/scanner services; conference room scheduling services; receive mail
- Dedicated (Desk: \$250/month; Office: \$550/month; Pod of 4 Desks: \$900/month)
 - All benefits included in the Coworking level; 24/7 access to Stoke; permanent location with locking storage; access to the online member platform; access to all Stoke coordinated events

A Passport membership add-on, which allows a member to work out of any of the DEC's nine locations, is also available for an additional \$100.

The City of Denton funds the rent and operating expenses for Stoke Denton, including the salary for the director. Per the Management Agreement between the DEC and the City, the DEC receives 90% of the membership fees generated by Stoke Denton and utilizes them for programming and event expenses; snacks, supplies, and other amenities and benefits; and marketing and recruitment expenses.

Membership at Stoke Denton is open to entrepreneurs and businesses ranging from freelancers and consultants to startups and growing young companies; membership is not restricted to those working in the technology sector, though tech companies and those that support an “entrepreneurial ecosystem” at Stoke Denton by participating in and contributing to the community of members are targeted.

Small Business Development Center–Denton

The North Central Texas College Small Business Development Center serves small business owners in the Denton area with assistance, support, and guidance to start, sustain, or grow a business. One-on-one counseling is provided by professional business advisors at no cost to recipients. In addition to business advising, the SBDC provides training opportunities for local businesses, nearly all at no cost to the participant. This government-backed, grant-funded program has been in existence over 35 years and is affiliated with the Small Business Administration (SBA).

In 1988-89, the SBDC coordinated with the City of Denton and the Denton Chamber of Commerce to place its first hired advisor through a cooperative agreement among the three entities. The contract specified that the Chamber provide office space, the City provide funding to augment in-kind expenses (\$11,000 in FY 2016-17), and NCTC facilitate the grant, including salaries and benefits. Since April 1999, SBDC–Denton has provided advising for more than 3,250 individuals seeking business assistance, mostly from Denton proper and all within Denton County, with more than \$12 million in reported capital funding for the business owners.

SBDC advisors offer assistance in:

- Writing a business plan
- Developing Social Media Marketing
- Seeking financial resources for capital
- Analyzing cash flow projection

- Improving financial profitability
- Developing competitive marketing strategies
- Advising on government regulations and taxes
- Training options in both management and operations