

WEDI Statement to media regarding the blog posted by Andrew Galarneau on August 30, 2024 accusing WEDI of exploiting refugee clients.

Andrew Galarneau wrote again about Westminster Economic Development Initiative (WEDI).

WEDI and our business incubation Bazaar spaces provide critical startup support for many small businesses. This work is complex and sensitive, particularly in cases where we work with immigrant populations.

His allegations that our team and WEDI would knowingly “exploit” our business-owner partners for any reason is beyond comprehension, entirely counter to our values and mission, and patently false.

Since Mr. Galarneau began blogging about WEDI in June, our organization offered multiple opportunities to meet with him to discuss his concerns. Mr. Galarneau declined or ignored these offers. In his subsequent blogs, he claims the organization is unwilling to answer his questions. This pattern is confounding and disturbing to us.

In one case, his criticism involved a former director and events from before COVID. Mr. Galarneau gave us a very tight time window to respond. We were in the process of trying to find answers, *and told him that*, when he posted his latest blog. It seems for someone who self-publishes, and clearly spent weeks preparing his latest post, he had the flexibility to wait for our answers. Why did he not?

When we gather all the relevant facts, we will make our findings available to any responsible member of the media interested in discussing them.

Statement Date: September 6, 2024

On behalf of the WEDI Board of Directors

VISION

All residents of Western New York can succeed and thrive in a culturally inclusive community.

MISSION

WEDI strengthens communities through a continuum of educational and financial resources, removing systemic barriers to economic equity for all Western New Yorkers.