



ACCESS TO CAPITAL FOR ENTREPRENEURS

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ACE Client Brown Toy Box Reaches New Heights with Inclusion on Oprah's Favorite Things List for the 2022 Holidays

Atlanta, Georgia. November 1, 2022 – [ACE | Access to Capital for Entrepreneurship](#) is pleased to announce that a product from [Terri-Nichelle Bradley's](#) Brown Toy Box, is included in [Oprah's Favorite Things](#) list for the 2022 holidays. The [Dadisi Academy Giant 3-ft Puzzles](#) are beautifully designed, fun shaped, and feature durable pieces, celebrating STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) and positive cultural representation. Brown Toy Box is an educational play-kit company that makes toys to get kids of all ethnicities, interests and abilities excited about STEM/STEAM careers. Oprah's endorsement provides a boost to an already soaring business, despite initial setbacks that could have stifled her success.

Not Her First Rodeo

As [Brown Toy Box](#) Founder and CEO, Bradley remembers the early start-up days when securing capital was just one of many challenges she faced. "We didn't have enough revenue to qualify for a bank loan," said Bradley, when she was trying to obtain financing needed for a national distribution deal with American retail giant, [Target Corporation](#) in 2021. The deal was going to enable the company's unique STEM/STEAM toys featuring children of color to be displayed in Target stores across the United States. "I was doing all these investor calls and meetings and they were really taking a lot of time and going nowhere," she said. "One of my mentors, who leads a bank, even told me 'We won't look at you for another couple of years.' " That was when ACE stepped in with capital making it possible for the struggling toy maker to execute the Target contract.

Teamwork Makes Terri's Dream Work

As a nonprofit community development financial institution (CDFI), ACE is known as a catalyst for entrepreneurial growth. Banks, corporations and foundation partners invest in CDFI's like ACE in communities across America. In turn, CDFIs fund loans to small businesses, provide technical assistance, and empower local entrepreneurs like Bradley. ACE uses financing and education to help businesses thrive, and focuses on women, people of color, and low to moderate-income business owners.

Bradley was already connected to ACE because both businesses had space in the shared office of the [Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs \(RICE\)](#) building in Atlanta. After several conversations with ACE's Director of Lending [Eric Swilling](#), a financing plan came together. "I realized this might be a good match," said Bradley.

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Several Atlanta partners, including [ACE](#) and [Atlanta Emerging Markets Inc](#), worked together to help make Bradley's opportunity a reality. ACE led the funding efforts by providing the first \$500K. In addition to lending, ACE's founder and CEO, [Grace Fricks](#), became a vocal advocate for Bradley, which helped to bring other Atlanta partners — including the Atlanta Wealth Building Initiative, 1863 Ventures, and Invest Atlanta — to the table, resulting in an additional \$1M of capital to fulfill the Target purchase order. "The reason that we are where we are right now is because we were able to get the capital," Bradley said. "That happened because some strong women in the investment and finance sectors really showed up for me." The distribution deal was finalized in October just in time to get Brown Toy Box items into stores before the 2021 holidays.

Once the ball started rolling...

According to Bradley, once the ball started rolling, it never stopped. With funding in one hand and Target purchase orders in the other, she set out to secure office space, forge new partnerships, and grow her team. That's when ACE provided Bradley with business advisory including contract reviews and hiring, particularly as she built out her executive team. "I'd never hired like this before," she said, "so they were able to use their expertise to help me think through those important things."

"This is what growth looks like," said Swilling. "Going from cohorts and incubators to classes on entrepreneurship, working through product development, and eventually launching a minority targeted STEM toy in the Atlanta market is one thing. And then moving on to get into thousands of stores of a big box retailer is a dream for many entrepreneurs who have a product. But to make it to the [Oprah's Favorite Things](#) List – that's next level growth for a business whose target audience includes all genders and races."

Dadisi means curious in Swahili and [the Dadisi Academy Crew](#) characters featured on the giant puzzles represent countries and kids from across the diaspora. "The vision for Brown Toy Box is to create a world where Black children see themselves positively represented in every space they experience regularly, be it the toy box, the television, or the classroom," says Bradley. "Play is such an important factor in how children view themselves, and their place in the world. [View press release HERE](#). Dadisi Academy Giant Puzzles are available for purchase at [BrownToyBox.com](#), and in the Oprah's Favorite Things gift guide found exclusively at [amazon.com/oprah](#).

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About Brown Toy Box

Brown Toy Box is an educational toy company creating products, content, and experiences for children ages 3-12 years old. As a mission-driven company, Brown Toy Box centers thoughtfully designed products and edutainment experiences crafted to cultivate curiosity, normalize Black excellence, and build 21st century skills in young children. Started as a subscription box in 2017, Brown Toy Box quickly evolved into an educational toy company creating its own products in 2021. Immediately after its launch, Brown Toy Box products were picked up by Target Stores nationwide. Brown Toy Box has been featured in Bloomberg, the [Tamron Hall Show](#), The American Journal of Play, Inc. magazine, and many other publications and media outlets. Brown Toy Box is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia. Visit <https://browntoybox.com> for more information.

About Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs Inc. (ACE)

ACE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and community development financial institution (CDFI) that provides loans and business development resources to help its borrowers create and grow sustainable businesses. ACE is the resource of choice for those who are typically not financed fully by traditional lenders. With a focus on underserved people and places, ACE connects small businesses owned by women, people of color and low to moderate income entrepreneurs in metro Atlanta and North Georgia with capital and coaching to sustain their businesses, retain their employees, and thereby support their local communities. Since 2000, ACE has loaned more than \$145 million to over 2,000 entrepreneurs, who have created or saved more than 17,000 jobs in Georgia. For more information, visit <https://aceloans.org/>.