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Pennsylvania SBDC Announces Targeted Effort to Help Small Businesses in Coal Communities

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. – Today, the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) announced a statewide effort aimed to help small businesses in coal impacted regions across Pennsylvania. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the U.S. Economic Administration (EDA) have funded three Pennsylvania SBDC projects as part of the POWER Initiative, a multi-agency effort to invest federal economic and workforce development resources in communities and regions negatively impacted by changes in the coal economy.

Over the years, Pennsylvania’s coal industry has gone through a number of positive and negative cycles. After a relatively normal period during most of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the last seven years have been very hard on the industry. Small businesses have been impacted in a variety of ways from decreased sales due to miners having less disposable income and from lost contracts with large supply chain companies affected by decreases in coal production. Activities related to coal mining in Pennsylvania are at historical lows, therefore planning for the economic future of these regions is critical.

The Pennsylvania SBDC, working with the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy at the University of Pennsylvania, will spearhead the development of a plan to outline strategic responses to enable small businesses to successfully adapt to the rapid transitions occurring in the power sector and in coal-reliant communities and supply chains. The goal of the project is to develop a statewide roadmap which policymakers and practitioners can use to identify and implement local and statewide action steps to provide services to prepare, sustain, and grow small businesses affected by changes in the coal economy.

In addition, the Pennsylvania SBDC will be working on the development of internal capacity building of Pennsylvania SBDC staff as well as delivery of an industry experts’ webinar series for small business. Program components will also include outreach to impacted businesses to inform them of resources that can help them survive the ongoing economic shift. In addition, this project will allow the Pennsylvania SBDC to strengthen its Coal Team which is made up of business consultants that are committed to serving businesses in the coal impacted region.

The St. Francis University SBDC is implementing programs to assist small business owners impacted by the significant loss of jobs in the Southern Alleghenies region of Pennsylvania (Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset Counties). Part one of their program is targeting small businesses that have been negatively impacted by job loss. Part two of the program is focusing on businesses that sell directly to the coal industry that are not seeing the revenues they once had due to mine closures in their region.

(MORE)

SBDC Locations

- Bucknell University
Clarion University
Duquesne University
Gannon University
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
Lehigh University
Lock Haven University
Penn State University
Saint Francis University
Saint Vincent College
Shippensburg University
Temple University
University of Pittsburgh
University of Scranton
The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
Widener University
Wilkes University

Additionally, the [University of Pittsburgh SBDC](#) and Innovation Works have received a workforce development grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to assist entrepreneurs in Armstrong, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland counties deeply impacted by declining coal jobs. The SBDC will offer two programs including “Mining Your Business,” which will focus on coal workers interested in starting their own business, and “Planning for Profits,” a community-based educational program that teaches business owners how to grow their business in a lean economy.

The regions in Pennsylvania most impacted by the changes in the coal economy include the Southwest, Southern Alleghenies and north-central parts of the state (Armstrong, Bedford, Cambria, Clarion, Elk, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Jefferson, Somerset, Washington, and Westmoreland counties), and the Northeast region (Luzerne, Northumberland, and Schuylkill counties). Other counties that also have coal mining operations include: Allegheny, Beaver, Blair, Butler, Carbon, Columbia, Dauphin, Huntingdon, Lackawanna, Lycoming, Mercer and Venango.

Companies in coal impacted communities who are interested in working with their local SBDC for confidential, no-cost business consulting can visit <http://pasbdc.org/centers> to find the center that serves their county.

About Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)

The Pennsylvania SBDC network is the only statewide, nationally accredited program that provides high quality one-on-one consulting, training and information resources to empower new and existing businesses. SBDC consultants work with entrepreneurs in confidential, individualized sessions to help them with a range of business issues including testing a new business proposition, shaping a business plan, investigating funding opportunities, and much more. The SBDC program is a public/private partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and 18 universities and colleges across the Commonwealth. For more information on the Pennsylvania SBDC services and impact, please visit www.pasbdc.org.

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