
CONTACT

Kelly Cofrancisco

(215) 746-6474

kcofran@wharton.upenn.edu

August 22, 2013**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Pennsylvania SBDC Receives EDA Grant to Help Small Firms with Business Disruption Strategies

SBDC LocationsBucknell 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

PHILADELPHIA – With the start of hurricane season, the [Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDC) have started work on a new project to help prepare small business owners to weather natural disasters and other business disruptions as part of a grant funded by the [U.S. Economic Development Administration](#) (EDA). The project, Operation Disaster Resiliency, provides the resources for SBDC consultants to advise small firms on business disruption and continuity planning to help them prepare for future business interruptions.

The project was launched as a result of the damage to businesses in Central and Northeastern Pennsylvania from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee in August and September of 2011. Combined, the two storms dumped more than 15 inches of rain on the area leading to the closing of hundreds of roads, forcing evacuation for thousands of people, and leaving many business owners with varying degrees of damage and millions of dollars in losses. As a result, more than 94,000 people applied for Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster assistance and over \$98 million in disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) have been approved.

“EDA’s investment is providing invaluable assistance to Pennsylvania businesses, and is an excellent example of the Obama administration’s commitment to helping communities rebuild and recover in the wake of natural disasters,” said Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Matt Erskine. “The resources being made available will help ensure the economic vitality of countless businesses in Pennsylvania and the communities that depend on them.”

Outreach and consulting under this project will be open to any businesses within the 14-county area that was hit the hardest during Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. Six SBDCs in this targeted region are available to consult with businesses to build their business disruption and continuity strategies as listed below:

- Northumberland and Perry Counties – [Bucknell University SBDC](#)
- Dauphin, Lebanon and Lancaster Counties – [Kutztown University SBDC](#)
- Lycoming County – [Lock Haven University SBDC](#)
- York County – [Shippensburg University SBDC](#)
- Bradford, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming Counties – [The University of Scranton SBDC](#)
- Columbia, Luzerne and Sullivan Counties – [Wilkes University SBDC](#)

(MORE)

“This program is meant to educate small business owners on ways that they can put business disruption and continuity plans in place for the future,” said Pennsylvania SBDC State Director Christian Conroy. “One issue that became very apparent when working with many of the companies impacted by the flooding of 2011 was their lack of a redundant back-up of critical business information and a plan to use technology to continue operations independent of their business’ physical location,” he added.

Education on cloud-based software, mobile-ready strategies and ways to optimize a company’s online presence are a key part of the business disruption consulting being offered by the SBDC. Businesses will be able to build web strategies from personalized consulting on search engine optimization (SEO), eCommerce and other ways to bolster their online sales to help supplement their local in-person sales. Business owners will also be encouraged to develop mobile-ready strategies to be able to work remotely and communicate with staff during an emergency situation.

The SBDC is also working to better prepare businesses for future interruptions through the development of business disruption and continuity plans, advice on acquiring capital (before and after a disruption) and helping companies diversify their revenue streams through new markets. Businesses will be advised to explore their growth potential through expanding their sales online, abroad or with the government to encourage customer and supplier variation to better weather future disasters.

Small businesses located in Bradford, Dauphin, Columbia, Lancaster, Lebanon, Luzerne, Lycoming Northumberland, Perry, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, York, and Wyoming Counties are encouraged to contact their local SBDC to find out more about business disruption and continuity planning strategies for their business.

Business owners can also visit www.pasbdc.org/business-disruption for additional resources.

###

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.