

RURAL BUSINESS MENTORING PROGRAM – OVERVIEW

Delaware Economic Development Office Certified Rural Business Mentoring Program

The Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO) and Downtown Delaware have developed Small Business Mentoring Program (RBMP), an innovative “train the trainer” program to strengthen new, existing and potential business owners and stakeholders in rural Delaware. The goal of this program is to increase the sustainability and provide both an exchange of important business principles and access to a “tool kit of small business strategies for downtowns” utilizing the valuable business resources generated through the successful DEDO Project Pop Up program model, a proven strategy for long term vacancy reduction.

Mentor Recruitment

This program will utilize **Certified Project Pop Up Business Owners** as Mentors. Certified Project Pop Business Owners are those who are in good standing as determined by the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO), who have successfully operated their DEDO Project Pop Up business for at least one (1) year, and who are willing to commit time to serving as mentors for other small businesses. Exceptions to this criteria will be determined by DEDO, as well as the addition of other qualified local business owners as mentors.

These leaders possess excellent people skills, exceptional attention to detail, and a strong understanding of successful business principles, and may include Chamber of Commerce personnel; town council/mayor/administrators or other town staff; and qualified Main Street staff and volunteers (or Economic Development Task Force members), including from the local revitalization program and downtown business community, with a priority being given to those who currently own or who have previously owned businesses, including 501c3's or 501c6's. Final determination of those designated as part of the Mentor Support Group (MSG) will be determined by DEDO.

After acceptance into the program, **each Mentors-in-Training will be required to attend, at minimum, training in four of the following key areas**, though they are encouraged to attend as many as possible.

1. Validating your business idea/Business plan basics
2. Branding your business/Advertising/Marketing
3. eCommerce/Social media tools/How to use FaceBook ads
4. Tech tools for your business
5. Customer Service
6. Positioning for funding/Sources of Small Business Financing
7. Cost saving measures: Bootstrapping/Working with vendors /When to hire/ How to minimize “shrinkage”
8. Window and product display/Signage
9. How to perform a “Visual Audit”
10. Energy efficiency options

Periodicity

All Mentors in the RBMP are asked to make a six to twelve month commitment to the program as a prerequisite to their selection for participating and will be provided with an honorarium for their time once certified and called upon to visit with businesses.

The Project Pop Up Mentoring Program Team

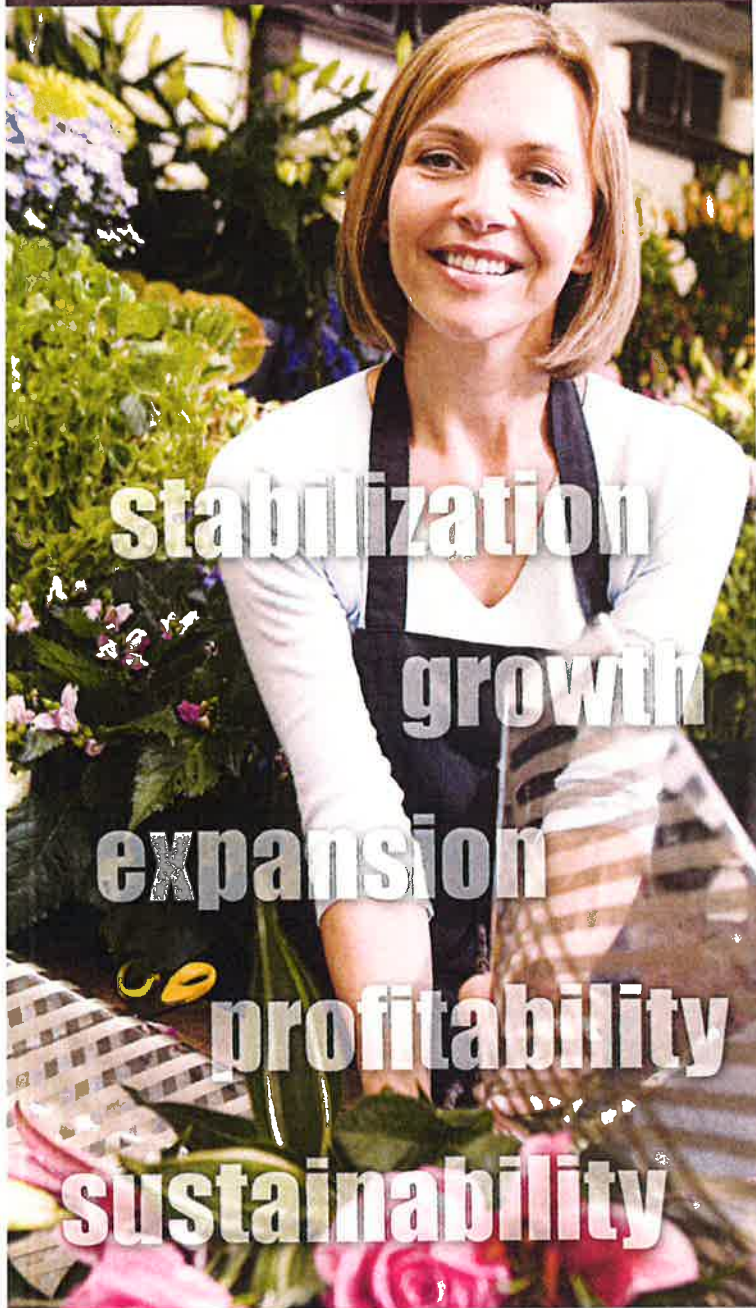
The RBMP Team is co-led by **Diane Laird, State Coordinator for Downtown Delaware**, and **Ken Anderson, Director for Entrepreneurial and Small Business Support**; both are programs of the Delaware Economic Development Office.

Ms. Diane Laird coordinates and conducts technical services to designated Main Street towns and Commercial District Affiliates, while providing support to downtown entrepreneurs and small business owners statewide. She has co-led numerous educational sessions at the annual National Main Streets Conferences, including most recently has co-led numerous educational sessions at the annual National Main Streets Conferences, including at the most recent conference in Atlanta, GA entitled, *"How Teamwork Expanded Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Delaware."* She co-authored the August 2007 *Main Street News* article "Recruiting Sustainable Businesses" and speaks regularly in Delaware on the topics of downtown business development, vacancy reduction, eCommerce, and strategic planning. (Diane.laird@state.de.us or 302-577-8477)

Mr. Ken Anderson is currently the Director, Entrepreneurial and Small Business Support for the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO), an executive state agency, responsible for entrepreneurialism and small business support. Additionally, Ken chairs the Governor's Supplier Diversity Council. In that role, Ken led a process that resulted in Individuals with DisAbilities and an inclusive Small Business Focus Program being added to the state's supplier diversity portfolio. The former a first in the nation. Ken brought and led the DEDO Kauffman FastTrac Entrepreneurial Training to Delaware and now oversees that DEDO funded training currently being delivered by the Delaware Technical Community College. Ken has co-led numerous educational sessions at the annual National Main Streets Conferences, including the most recent conference in Atlanta, GA entitled, *"How Teamwork Expanded Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Delaware."* (Kenneth.R.Anderson@state.de.us or 302-577-8477)

RURAL BUSINESS MENTORING PROGRAM

A PEER TO PEER SMALL BUSINESS NETWORK
FOCUSED ON ACCELERATED GROWTH, EXPANSION AND
PROFITABILITY OF RURAL DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES.



LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Rural downtown business owners may access targeted assistance through the Rural Business Mentoring Program (RBMP). This program connects downtown business owners and entrepreneurs with qualified representatives, including experienced small business owners and downtown revitalization professionals, all of whom have been vetted through the Delaware Economic Development Office.

Small business owners may request assistance in key topic areas, such as:

- > Business Plan Strategies
- > Branding Your Business/Advertising/Marketing
- > Social Media Tools/eCommerce
- > Customer Service
- > Positioning for Funding
- > Sources of Small Business Financing
- > Small Business Cost Saving Measures
- > Window and Product Display Solutions
- > Performing a "Visual Audit" of Your Business
- > and others

Through collaboration and on-site visitation, these short-term consultations provide downtown business owners with quick, effective strategies to advance their business operations. Unique business challenges, both online and within their "brick and mortar" storefront, are addressed. Consultations are free of charge to qualified Delaware business owners and entrepreneurs.

Visit downtowndelaware.org

To learn more about the Rural Business Mentoring Program or to arrange a one-on-one consultation, contact Diane Laird:
Diane.Laird@state.de.us 302-577-8477



Committed to the future of rural communities

Downtown Delaware
Building Business Opportunity in Delaware's Commercial Districts

**RURAL BUSINESS MENTORING PROGRAM SAMPLE DOCUMENT:
INVITATION TO PROSPECTS - MENTORS-IN-TRAINING**

Good afternoon,

You are receiving this email because you have been identified as a local business leader, and someone that we believe could be a good mentor on one or more topics to help small business owners, and particularly those located in Delaware's downtown communities.

We are now launching the *Rural Business Mentoring Program (RBMP)*, an innovative "train the trainer" program to strengthen new, existing and potential business owners and local business leaders in rural Delaware. The goal of this program is to increase the sustainability of small business by providing business owners with an exchange of important business principles and access to a "tool kit of small business strategies for downtowns". The program is co-sponsored by USDA Rural Development and DEDO/Downtown Delaware. In this program "Expert Trainers" will train a team of "Mentors in Training", and in turn, those Mentors will transfer small business strategies to small business owners in rural Delaware downtowns.

We invite you to become a part of the RBMP Mentor Group.

To recap a few important aspects of the program:

- The training calendar for this first phase of training has been arranged to target several timeframes on Tuesday's and Thursday's throughout September and October.
- 10 training sessions are scheduled, most of which are anticipated to be 1.5 to 2 hours in length, with the exception of one four hour session and an optional two-day eCommerce training program. (See signature in this email for more information.)
- Those that choose to participate as "Mentors in Training" must attend a minimum of three sessions, although they are encouraged to attend as many as possible, and even all the sessions if their schedules permit.
- Once trainings are complete, DEDO will identify which participants are best qualified to act as mentors within the various topic areas, and receive a formal designation as part of the RBMP Mentor Group.
- Designated Mentors that are requested and actually meet with business owners will be offered a \$100 honorarium for each meeting.
- Mentors will be offered the opportunity to stay in touch with our Expert Trainers to ensure they retain the ability to solve issues that may be just beyond their reach to address.

If you are interested in becoming a part of the RBMP Mentor Group, you are asked to indicate via the Eventbrite link (end of this email) which of the trainings you would like to participate. Space is limited, so we encourage you to sign up as soon as possible. Understanding that issues sometimes arise, you may withdraw from any session that you had registered for, keeping in mind the earlier the better, as others may want to attend.

Finally, we are making an effort to tape the training sessions for an internal library, thus it would provide an opportunity for you to access the training if you are unable to attend any particular session.

- **IMPORTANT NOTE: Individuals are selected by DEDO to participate in this training, based on their business leadership capabilities. If you know someone that may like to attend training please do not forward this invitation to participate or invite them to training sessions yourself, but rather please contact**
 - (contact information)
 - Here is the Eventbrite link to register for the sessions: (link)



RURAL BUSINESS MENTORING PROGRAM SAMPLE DOCUMENT:

INVITATION TO PROSPECTS - MENTORS-IN-TRAINING AND EXPERT TRAINERS

QUESTIONNAIRE

(This document is provided at the informational session along with the Power Point.)

Name:

Business:

Town:

I see myself serving:

_____ As a mentor to small businesses

_____ As a subject matter expert to teach the team of mentors

_____ Possibly both – a mentor and a subject matter expert

_____ Neither of above but I can help get the word out!

Please place an E (Subject matter expert) or M (mentor to teach business owners) next to the subject areas in which you would like be considered:

Validating your business idea/Business plan basics

Branding your business/Advertising/Marketing

eCommerce/Social media tools/How to use FaceBook ads

Tech tools for your business

Customer Service

Positioning for funding/Sources of Small Business Financing

Cost saving measures: Bootstrapping/Working with vendors /When to hire/ How to minimize “shrinkage”

Window and product display/Signage

How to perform a “Visual Audit”

Energy efficiency options

Please use the back to offer your thoughts on additional topic areas, or to add any additional thoughts as we prepare to launch this program.

**RURAL
BUSINESS**
MENTORING PROGRAM

TEMPLATE FOR HANDOUT PROVIDED BY SPEAKER AT EACH TRAINING SESSION.

LATER COMPILED INTO A MANUAL WITH ALL PRESENTATION/NOTES.

Topic of Training Session:	
Date of Session:	
Instructor Name:	
Instructor Email Address:	
Instructor Phone:	

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.