

2015-2017
STRATEGIC PLAN



SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
CENTER NETWORK

**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

INTRODUCTION

Lead Economic Development Agency - The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is the lead state agency responsible for improving the competitiveness of Illinois in the global economy resulting in growing, prosperous industries, high quality jobs and world-class communities. DCEO provides information, guidance and advocacy to facilitate and advance the economic development process in partnership with Illinois' communities, businesses, and a vast network of public and private service providers.

The Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology at DCEO provides a wide range of services and resources to both prospective and existing business owners. The Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network has been providing professional guidance for business growth to the state's small business sector since 1984. The Illinois SBDC Network operates with funding support from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), state government and other federal agencies, as well as university, community college and non-profit host institutions. It performs its functions through programs and services, which include one on one business guidance, management training, information and other assistance provided directly by its staff and by its Illinois Small Business Development Center Network partners. The partner resources include the Illinois SBDC International Trade Centers; the Illinois SBDC Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship specialty services, the Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Centers; the First Stop Business Information Center and the Small Business Environmental Assistance Program.

CLIENTS

Customer Base - The Illinois SBDC Network serves existing small businesses, pre-venture clients, and innovative entrepreneurs with high growth potential. The growth and development of small businesses are critical to the Illinois economy. In general, businesses with up to 500 employees are defined as small businesses according to the guidelines of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). These small businesses comprise more than 98.2% of the estimated 1,200,000 businesses in the state and employ 48% of the private-sector workforce. However, nearly 97% of the employer businesses in Illinois employ less than 100 workers and 87% of the firms in Illinois employ less than 20 people.

Types of Clients - The clients of the Illinois SBDC normally fall within one of the following categories. The SBDC is striving to increase the number of hours of one on one business advice devoted to impact-ready clients that fall into the last three categories.

- ❑ *Pre-Venture, Nascent*: Individuals interested in starting a business that are seeking information, business advice and training assistance necessary for their start-up. This includes individuals who are in the concept stage. These clients are interested in basic information concerning business start-up that enables them to assess their interest in and ability to pursue new business start-up.
- ❑ *Start-up*: Clients seeking assistance and skills to overcome the obstacles faced during the establishment and startup operations of their business. Clients are in the process of starting or acquiring a small business or have already been in operation for up to one year.
- ❑ *Established*: Clients beyond their first year of operation. These are small businesses that need assistance with specific issues or challenges. Ongoing success of existing business clients is essential to the economic vitality of the state.
- ❑ *Innovation and Technology Focused w/High Growth Potential*: These clients have the potential for rapid growth or may already be growing at a rapid rate. They may have an innovative product or process that offers a competitive advantage typically involving intellectual property. These clients normally have very strong high growth potential. (Subset of Pre-Venture, Start-Up and Established)

CORE SERVICES

Business Strategy and Management - Services for existing businesses in the areas of marketing, sales, business expansion, financial management, financial analysis, public relations, information technology, social media, improved efficiency, human resources, workforce issues, business acquisition, business succession, disaster preparedness and disaster recovery assistance.

Business Startup – Services for pre-venture clients which include Starting Your Business In Illinois workshops, assistance with business feasibility and viability, publications and handbooks which include information on financial resources, sample business plans and industry specific information as well as referrals to appropriate business professionals.

Business Financing – Assistance for both existing businesses and startups in the areas of financial strategies, financial analysis, help with financial application processes and access to available capital, including debt, non-debt and equity financing.

Government Contracting Assistance - Guidance for existing businesses to expand their markets through government contracting to local, state and federal government agencies and prime government contractors. Services include the identification of potential buyers, automated bid matching, help with bidder applications, assistance with understanding government requirements, post award guidance and other contracting assistance services.

Export Assistance – Guidance for existing small businesses on developing new international markets. Services provided include basic assessment on export readiness, capabilities and foreign market potential for new-to-export firms; access to trade reference materials, international trade leads, educational seminars on international trade; identification of potential sources of funding and financial assistance for export ventures; direct links to the Office of Trade and Investment (OTI) to help identify buyers, agents and distributors and connection to more specialized international trade services as needed.

Innovation and Technology - Services in areas that include equity financing, intellectual property, commercialization and R and D funding targeted to clients that are developing ventures based on intellectual property for innovations and/or new technologies.

Regulatory Compliance – Business advice, training, and information services regarding regulatory compliance including environmental rules and regulations, business registration and filing requirements, IRS, OSHA, and other state and federal governmental regulations.

Business Training/Education – A wide range of focused business education and training programs structured to meet specific needs of the Illinois small business community.

TARGETED SECTORS

Illinois SBDC Network clients represent a broad range of market sectors. Illinois' proactive marketing efforts are targeted to the following seven high potential clusters, each made up of component industries which highlight strong interconnection with the statewide economy:

- Clean Energy
- Information Technology/Digital Media/ Telecommunications
- Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology
- Biomedical/Biotechnical
- Machinery and Fabricated Metal Parts Manufacturing
- Transportation and Logistics
- Advanced Materials

VISION and MISSION

THE VISION

To be recognized as the leading resource for business growth advancing the Illinois economy.

THE MISSION

To provide professional guidance for business growth.

CORE VALUES

The Illinois SBDC Network defines its mission, develops its services, and manages its operations in accordance with the following values and guiding principles:

RESPONSIVE TO STAKEHOLDERS

Our services are driven by market demand based upon research, trends, and ongoing response from our clients, partners, and other key stakeholders.

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

Our services are delivered through a dynamic, integrated, regional small business assistance delivery system accessible to all segments of the business community throughout the state.

QUALITY PERFORMANCE

Our services meet the highest standards of integrity, confidentiality, quality and timeliness and are continuously evaluated and improved to increase the value to our key stakeholders.

COLLABORATIVE USE OF RESOURCES

Our services are maximized through the efficient and effective use of resources and the leveraging of Network expertise utilizing partnerships and technology.

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

Our ongoing strategic planning process engages all aspects of the Network, drives the exploration of long-term issues, delivers systematic continuous improvement and allows for program modifications and enhancements as needed.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

The Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network partners and stakeholders have identified the following key strategic issues that drive our strategic planning and continuous improvement efforts.

- ❑ **NETWORK EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCY:** In order to remain relevant and provide value, the Illinois SBDC Network must stay abreast of emerging trends (e.g. demographic, economic and technological) from local to global that impact the existing marketplace and create new markets. Based on these identified trends, the Network should tailor its services, resources and programs in formats appropriate to the target markets identified. The Network should take a leadership role in educating clients about how these local to global trends can have an impact on all aspects of their business strategy, operations and growth.
- ❑ **IMAGE IN THE MARKETPLACE:** The Illinois SBDC Network understands the breadth and fragmentation of resources available to small business owners and prospective entrepreneurs. The Network should establish itself as the leading source of assistance for existing small business and start up entrepreneurs with the best potential to help them launch, develop and grow. The Network must stand out in a dynamic and crowded marketplace with a strong image, focused message and the ability to provide clearly defined services that can be tailored to meet the needs of a diverse client group. The Network also has numerous other audiences to reach, including, government leaders at all levels, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, business associations, lenders and host institutions.
- ❑ **UTILIZATION OF RESOURCES:** The Illinois SBDC Network must continue to attract, retain and educate the quality center directors, business advisors and trainers needed to support their clients launch, development and growth. The Network must be provided with access to available and emerging technologies, tools, resources and information which improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of targeted, relevant, expert services to clients which provide them with clear benefit and high value. The Network must keep current with changing technologies, tools and resources.
- ❑ **STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS:** The demands for services and the costs to operate the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network continue to increase. Local, state and federal resources are tightening. The Network must ensure sustainable funding is provided to maintain and expand services provided to program clients. The relationships with each host organization and key partners are vital to establishing a sustainable network organization. The Network should establish itself as a value-added partner to address funding challenges, program delivery, management and marketing support. Strong relationships and collaboration will result in measurable impact addressing shared strategic goals.

STRATEGIC GOALS

STRATEGIC GOAL 1 – INCREASE RELEVANCE

**MAXIMIZE THE NETWORK’S EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCY
TO ADVANCE BUSINESS GROWTH**

STRATEGIC GOAL 2 – PROMOTE VALUE

**POSITION THE NETWORK AS THE PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF
VALUED GUIDANCE FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND BUSINESSES
WITH GROWTH POTENTIAL**

STRATEGIC GOAL 3– MAXIMIZE RESOURCES

**EFFECTIVELY UTILIZE RESOURCES, TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY
TO MAXIMIZE CLIENT SUCCESS**

STRATEGIC GOAL 4 – STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

**GROW COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS
FOR NETWORK SUSTAINABILITY**

STRATEGIC GOAL 1 – INCREASE RELEVANCE

MAXIMIZE THE NETWORK’S EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCY TO ADVANCE BUSINESS GROWTH.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Continuously identify and assess emerging needs and trends.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
1.1a - Identify pressing needs of network clients and the small business community using informal and formal methods.	Conduct needs assessment surveys or focus groups 2 times per year.	SBDC Network
1.1b - Benchmark the best assessment practices of state and national peers and competitors.	Conduct minimum of 2 State Advisory Board Meetings per year and regularly solicit feedback.	State Office
1.1c - Educate business advisors and specialists across the Network on emerging needs and trends.	Secure information from peer programs in America’s SBDC at meetings and other interactions.	State Office SBDC Network
1.1c - Educate business advisors and specialists across the Network on emerging needs and trends.	Expand opportunities at the annual IESBGA Professional Development Conference.	State Office SBDC Network
1.1c - Educate business advisors and specialists across the Network on emerging needs and trends.	Incorporate relevant topics into the Monthly Connection Calls and Weekly Connection emails.	State Office
1.1c - Educate business advisors and specialists across the Network on emerging needs and trends.	Develop, maintain and promote a calendar of opportunities for specialty cross training of Network members.	State Office
1.1d – Continuously scan environment for changing trends/strategic issues and update strategic plan as needed to ensure Network remains relevant.	Conduct a quarterly review of the Network strategic plan and an annual planning session with Network members and key stakeholders.	State Office SBDC Network
1.1d – Continuously scan environment for changing trends/strategic issues and update strategic plan as needed to ensure Network remains relevant.	Continuously execute and refine plan through the ongoing engagement of the strategic planning groups.	State Office SBDC Network

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Deliver effective and relevant services which address client needs and contribute to business growth and job creation.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
1.2a – Provide client-specific, in-depth assistance to entrepreneurs and small businesses that contributes to the creation of new businesses, the expansion of existing firms and the creation and retention of jobs in Illinois.	One on One Hours CY 2015 - 70,000 CY 2016 - 72,000 CY 2017 - 74,000	Actual SBDC Network
	Hours per Client CY 2015 - 7.0 Hours CY 2016 - 7.5 Hours CY 2017 - 8.0 Hour	Actual SBDC Network
	New Businesses Launched: CY15 - 500 CY16 - 550 CY17 - 600	Actual SBDC Network
	Jobs Created: CY 2015 - 6,200 CY 2016 - 6,500 CY 2017 - 6,800	Actual SBDC Network
	Jobs Retained: CY 2015 - 11,500 CY 2016 - 11,750 CY 2017 - 12,000	Actual SBDC Network
1.2b – Provide guidance to clients which results in them obtaining business capital (debt and non-debt) which allows them to start, grow and improve their business.	Debt Financing Secured: CY 2015 - \$295 M CY 2016 - \$315 M CY 2017 - \$325 M	Actual SBDC Network
	Equity Financing Secured: CY 2015 - \$85M CY 2016 - \$95M CY 2017 - \$105M	Actual SBDC and SBDC TIES
1.2c - Provide client specific in-depth assistance to small businesses resulting in new market expansion by accessing international trade and government contracting opportunities.	Total Export Sales: CY 2015 - \$250 M CY 2016 - \$275 M CY 2017 - \$300 M	Actual SBDC ITCs
	Government Contract Dollars: CY 2015 - \$1.4 B CY 2016 - \$1.45 B CY 2017 - \$1.5 B	Actual PTACs

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Ensure the delivery of relevant and effective services throughout the Network.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
1.3a – Assess center management processes, identify best practices, deficiencies and assist with corrective actions	-Site visits – 2 / year minimum -Email (Weekly Updates) -Monthly Connection Calls -Monthly Review Center Performance	State Office SBDC Network
1.3b - Manage a regular, ongoing performance review system of the services, products and tools to ensure relevance and value.	Maintain center business advisor performance standards: -Minimum 1,100 hours of business advice for each \$80,000 provided by program.	State Office SBDC Network
1.3c – Assess level of customer satisfaction and approval of services provided by the Network.	Increase client satisfaction rate Actual CY 2015 = 90% CY 2016 = 91% CY 2017 = 92%	State Office SBDC Network
	Conduct quarterly reviews, at minimum, with the standing strategic issues groups.	State Office

STRATEGIC GOAL 2 – PROMOTE VALUE

POSITION THE NETWORK AS THE PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF VALUED GUIDANCE FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND BUSINESSES WITH GROWTH POTENTIAL.

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Target and attract businesses and entrepreneurs with the potential to create economic impact.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
2.1a – Identify client segments for each program.	Integrate the targeted profile for impact ready clients for each program to Network Centers and update annually as needs change.	State Office SBDC Network
2.1b – Understand needs of target clients.	Identify top needs for impact ready clients for each Network program.	State Office SBDC Network
2.1c – Develop value propositions to target clients.	Customize the delivery of tools and services to targeted clients to best meet needs.	State Office SBDC Network
2.1d – Develop Outreach Strategy and Marketing Plan for specific segments.	Incorporate value proposition into all marketing and positioning materials, templates, etc...	State Office SBDC Network

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Develop long-term relationships with clients that have significant opportunities to grow and create jobs in Illinois.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
2.2a – Identify clients with high opportunity to grow.	Use available tools (GrowthWheel; Assessment; etc...) to provide ongoing, elevated levels of service to impact ready clients.	State Office SBDC Network
2.2c – Provide specific services and tools for each client segment.	Provide chart detailing specific services/tools for client segments to each center and provide updates twice per year.	State Office SBDC Network
2.2d - Provide long term, in-depth, client specific business advice, training and resources.	Long Term Clients Actual CY 2015 - 3,000 CY 2016 - 3,050 CY 2017 - 3,100	SBDC Network

OBJECTIVE 2.3

Deliver a consistent message to cultivate a highly recognized SBDC Network brand.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
2.3a – Create message promoting the services and value of the Network.	Include a Success Story in each Weekly Connection, each monthly Small Business Connection and to DCEO Marketing and SBA Illinois District Office.	State Office
	Distribute 1 success story/fact sheet per month through PR and marketing channels that focuses on services for high growth potential clients.	State Office
2.3b – Participate in ED conferences, chambers, state/local government meetings, stakeholder events, as appropriate.	Center partners conduct a minimum of two local stakeholder events per year.	State Office SBDC Network
2.3c – Deliver and distribute the message to diverse audience, utilizing associations, professional publications, videos, websites, media outlets, etc...	Distribute marketing materials to the network, including instructions on use of the logo and marketing guidelines 2 times per year.	State Office
	Create print pieces containing stats, all services and SBDC reports.	State Office SBDC Network
	Update videos annually to use on YouTube channel, post on website, use in social media, email campaigns, et...	State Office SBDC Network

**STRATEGIC GOAL 3 – MAXIMIZE RESOURCES
EFFECTIVELY UTILIZE RESOURCES, TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY
TO MAXIMIZE CLIENT SUCCESS.**

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Fully deploy a rapid onboarding process for Network personnel.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
3.1a – Provide orientation and four core training modules to all new directors and advisors.	New director and staff orientation within first 30 days of hire. Include host institution representatives.	State Office
	All new and existing professional staff to complete a minimum of 40 hours of professional development training per year.	SBDC Network
3.1b – Set up job shadowing system for all new hires in the SBDC Network.	Link up appropriate Network staff through center visits within 30 days of new staff starting in the Network	State Office
3.1c – Expand and strengthen the Certified Business Development Advisor Peer Coach program.	Recruit and train a complete cadre of peer coaches.	State Office SBDC Network
	Annually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Peer Coach System.	State Office SBDC Network

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Empower Network personnel with the most appropriate tools and technologies.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
3.2a – Research and recommend appropriate technology for use in the network.	Monthly meetings of the Tools and Technology Strategic Group to review and recommend new resources.	State Office Strategic Planning Group
3.2b – Develop and Implement technology training clearinghouse for network members.	Maintain up to date listing and access instructions for all Network resources/tools on CenterConnect. Update at least quarterly.	State Office
	Training on resources provided through Monthly Connection Calls, webinars and other special sessions as needed.	State Office
3.3c - Maximize the Networks’ use of technology including, webinars, eNewsletters, LinkedIn, Face Book, Twitter, Instagram, etc...	Provide updated social media templates, guidance, instructions at least quarterly.	State Office
3.3d – Monitor the Network’s use of technology with clients.	Conduct electronic survey for the Network at least twice a year to determine usage of each resource.	State Office

OBJECTIVE 3.3

Effectively integrate specialized expertise throughout the Network.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
3.3a – Identify regionally based advanced skill sets and specialized expertise within the Network.	Complete quarterly updates for the Directory of Expert Resources.	State Office
3.3b. - Identify private sector specialists, resources and expertise to assist innovative and technology driven clients.	Revise listing of private sector experts and post on CenterConnect at least twice a year.	State Office SBDC Network
3.3c – Develop process for Expert Teams to assist centers with special client projects and needs as needed.	Implement Expert Team process during the first year with one team and expand as needed.	State Office SBDC Network

STRATEGIC GOAL 4 – STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS GROW COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS FOR NETWORK SUSTAINABILITY.

OBJECTIVE 4.1

Build stronger relationships with existing Network funding stakeholders.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
4.1a - Utilize success stories and performance outputs to validate value added.	Distribute Annual Reports to stakeholders, hosts and DCEO Marketing/Communications.	State Office
4.1b - Develop communication system that promotes resource and knowledge sharing.	Develop special electronic communications bulletin for key stakeholders.	State Office
4.1c – Expand regular engagement and communications with key funding stakeholders.	Implement an orientation/training program for host organization leadership to be delivered for each new host and provided to existing hosts at least every 2 years.	SBDC State Director /Associate Director

OBJECTIVE 4.2

Broaden stakeholder support by attracting new collaborative partners.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
4.2a - Raise public awareness through the SBDC Network and services.	Evaluate potential funding options and present recommendations each quarter	State Office SBDC Network
4.2b – Identify and develop list of potential new partners based on needs.	Annually create an updated one page ROI fact sheet with economic impact information to use in securing new funding partners.	State Office
	Every three years revise and distribute a SBDC Network Application to reaffirm existing partners and to seek out new partner organizations.	State Office
4.2c – Analyze other potential stakeholders (CPA, community banks, credit unions, etc.) and develop new partners.	Organize outreach/education meetings with potential stakeholders each month.	State Office
4.2d – Identify and utilize non-traditional funders for both client financing and potential center support.	Evaluate potential funding options and present recommendations each quarter	State Office

OBJECTIVE 4.3

Utilize partnerships to advocate for small businesses and promote an entrepreneurial culture.

TACTICS/ACTIONS	INDICATORS/RESULTS/TIMELINES	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY
4.3a - Work with advocacy organizations to identify current concerns.	Upload Regulatory Alerts on website throughout the year.	State Office: First Stop; SBEAP.
4.3b - Communicate on a timely basis with small business community on proposed rules and legislation.	Monthly Small Business Connection Newsletter	First Stop
	Quarterly Clean Air Clips Newsletter	SBEAP
4.3c – Promote and recognize the contributions made by small businesses through the support of local and regional business competitions, entrepreneurship recognition and other initiatives.	Promote and engage in Small Business Week activities and events.	State Office: First Stop; SBEAP.



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