

“Celebrating 30 Years of Small Business Success”



November 17, 2014

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Spotlight on Success – Frantz Manufacturing

Frantz Manufacturing, a 100 year old Sterling company that produces ball bearings, skate wheels and conveyor bearings was recently awarded an ISTEP grant to travel to Germany to market their products. Domestic sales continue to grow at a good rate, but the firm wanted to expand their export efforts. Frantz officials utilized the **Illinois Small Business Development Center International Trade Centers at Bradley University in Peoria and at Black Hawk College in Moline. Beatriz Poloney, at Bradley**, helped Frantz reclassify products to save exporting costs. At **Black Hawk, Michelle Lewis** is guiding the company through the ISTEP process. Frantz offers an excellent example of crucial SBDC collaboration to help a firm exploit foreign markets and build the Illinois economy.

Learn more about Frantz Manufacturing at www.frantz-mfg.com

Clean Energy Challenge

Clean Energy Trust strives to accelerate businesses and technologies that improve the ways we create, conserve and consume energy. Over the past five years, our marquee program has been the **Clean Energy Challenge**. The Clean Energy Challenge has become a nationally acclaimed accelerator program that has jumpstarted more than 60 cleantech startups in the Midwest. With generous support from sponsors, including longtime Title Sponsors the U.S. Department of Energy and Wells Fargo, and new Title Sponsor the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, we've been able to grow the program and provide more funding and mentorship to more quality companies. We are thrilled to announce the official launch of the fifth annual Clean Energy Challenge, which will culminate in the final live pitch event on April 14, 2015.

Top 5 Reasons Why This Year's Challenge Will Be The Best Ever

1. The first Clean Energy Challenge in 2011 had a prize pool of \$130,000. This year we're proud to announce a **record total of \$1,000,000 in investment awards!**
2. We've built a **brand new, beautiful Clean Energy Challenge website** to showcase our sponsors and past finalist success stories. It will also make the application process a breeze. Check it out at www.challenge.cleanenergytrust.org.

3. Speaking of the application process, this year we've partnered with YouNoodle, a startup competition platform, for a more **simplified and streamlined application and evaluation process**.

4. This year we're not only providing more funding, but more opportunities for startups at different stages. In addition to the Student and Early Stage tracks, we've added a **new competition track for Emerging Growth companies** with commercial products in market and demonstrated revenues. [Download our Applicant FAQ](#) for more information about the competition tracks and eligibility requirements.

5. As always, we rely on partner organizations from all over the Midwest to help us shine a spotlight on the most innovative cleantech companies in the region. This year we're excited to be working closely with **new regional partners** like the Iowa Energy Center, Case Western University and Accelerate Michigan.

We're looking for applicants, mentors, volunteers and sponsors to make this year's program electric!

Maximizing Neoserra – December Impact Survey

The next electronic impact survey will be sent from the SBDC Lead Center in Mid-December 2014. The Lead Center will send an email to all SBDC Directors stating the exact day the survey will be sent. We strongly urge you to contact your clients to notify them to look for the survey and to ask if they need assistance in completing it. The last survey was sent in September so many clients should have impact to report.

Valued Resources – Neoserra FAQ

Go to the link below for quick answers to some of your Neoserra questions. You can find this under "Help" tab at the top of the Neoserra page.

[NEOSERRA FAQ](#)

Network News and Moves - America's SBDC Call for Presentation Guidelines

America's SBDC annual conference is the professional development event for the entire SBDC Network, providing our consultants, advisors, state directors, regional directors, associate state directors, and associate regional directors, the latest information and techniques to enhance their skills, improve their training programs, or increase center metrics and productivity. America's SBDC national conference will be held September 8-11, 2015 at the San Francisco Marriott Marquis, in beautiful San Francisco, California.

America's SBDC Professional Development and Education Conference Committee seeks proposals for 1.5 hour, 3-hour (half day), and 6-hour (full day) programs. Though the conference draws over 1500 professionals from across the country, the number of participants per program could range 35-150 people.

For professional paid speakers we have a small budget and we will negotiate cost, travel fees, room rates, and other amenities as a part of your compensation.

All SBDC Presenters: If selected, must register for the conference and will be provided a reduced conference fee.

All Proposals should include a presentation (slide deck) and handouts. Updates to submissions are permitted prior to review by the Conference Committee, and if selected, presentations can be updated prior to conference as well. The sessions selected should

enhance the quality of SBDC services and provide the SBDC/SBTDC Network practical information to either assist small businesses or their centers.

Criteria for selection include: quality of the proposal, clarity and organization, creativity and/or delivery method, ability to deliver in prescribed time frame, and fit to the professional development needs of the SBDC.

Submissions should include title, brief description (less than 60 words), program outline or agenda, and program learning objectives. All proposals are submitted through America's SBDC Conference portal found on the America's SBDC Conference webpage, www.AmericasSBDC.org/conference click on the link for workshop submissions.

Returning submitters may use the same login and password, while those posting submissions for first time will be required to set up user login and password.

Completed submissions are due by December 31, 2014.

Four key areas of education include:

- 1) advisor core competencies
- 2) advanced consultant' skills
- 3) center management
- 4) senior leadership at the associate and/or state director level.

Topics in marketing and sales, counseling and leadership, management and planning, finance and accounting, technology, self-improvement, and international trade may be submitted for consideration. A more complete list of subjects and guidelines may be found at www.AmericasSBDC.org/conference

Key Note speakers are normally reserved for our sponsors; however if you wish to submit a proposal as a keynote speaker please email Brett Thibodeau or Karen Shannon with your request and a brief description of your topic. All workshop proposal questions should be referred to Brett Thibodeau, 703/764-9850.

A sample proposal format is included in the Call For Papers Guidelines. We recommend you print the guidelines to help you coordinate your proposal for online submission.

We look forward to seeing you in September, 2015 at America's SBDC annual conference.

America's SBDC Network Connect

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to see the November 13, 2014 edition of [America's SBDC Network Connect Newsletter](#). Check out the last story in the "SBDCs in the News" section to see an Illinois SBDC Success Story or click on [SBDC Helps Craft Distillery Start From Scratch](#).

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The **WEEKLY CONNECTION** is distributed by the Illinois SBDC and DCEO Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology each Monday to members of the DCEO Illinois SBDC Network to provide the service delivery partners with regular updates on small business issues, opportunities and resources. You may send any information to share with the Illinois SBDC Network to Tom.Becker@illinois.gov. Please feel free to forward this update to other interested resource providers and key stakeholders.
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