

NEWS RELEASE

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Program aims at stabilizing employment and fostering growth in state businesses

CENTREVILLE---The University of Michigan's Institute for Research on Labor, Employment, and the Economy (IRLEE) is alerting area businesses to a program funded by the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth (DELEG) known as "Michigan Business: Surviving and Thriving" or MB:S2T. Glen Oaks Community College along with MI-Works! and the St. Joseph County Economic Development Corporation are helping get out the word about the program on a local basis. "This is an economic development tool and another possible funding source for local companies to help make them stronger, which is obviously good for our area. Right now we are helping get the word out about the program," said Kari Scare, Director of Business Services at Glen Oaks Community College.

Glen Oaks will host a free program about Michigan Business Surviving to Thriving (MB:S2T) on Wednesday, February 24. The seminar begins with a networking presentation from 9:00-9:30 a.m. followed by a 9:30-10:30 a.m. presentation on MB:S2T by Steve Wilson, IRLEE Director. The networking continues in the Business Development Center's Dresser Auditorium from 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Those wishing to attend should RSVP Cathy Knapp, Executive Director of the St. Joseph County Economic Development Corporation at Email: knapp@stjosephcounty.mi.org

The program's mission is to stabilize employment levels and foster growth in Michigan businesses.

The program will assist Michigan businesses in becoming globally competitive in the current economic conditions through diversification, technology, and overall improvement in the performance of a firm.

Basic qualifications for Michigan businesses are:

- Must have been in business for two years
- Committed to maintaining Michigan operations
- At risk of having to layoff workers due to structural changes in the economy, with a goal of preventing further layoffs through increasing firm performance
- Must be willing to share the firm's detailed financial information with the University of Michigan (used in confidence for analysis purposes only and will not be subject to the Freedom of Information Act)

The project's managers and firms work together to develop a realistic strategy and action plans for better performance. Typical engagements include: a complete analysis of the firm, identification of competitive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks, development of a customized adjustment plan with a special emphasis on diversification, and detailing the specific projects necessary to improve the firm's performance.

The MB:S2T Project diagnostic analysis and planning is provided on a cost-shared basis. The MB:S2T program pays 75% of the cost. Fees for the client firm range from \$1,000 to \$4,000. The project managers assist firms in arranging for the outside technical assistance needed for the projects identified during the planning phase and they help fund those projects. Typical implementation services include: Searches for required talent and service providers, assistance in vetting potential providers, assistance in development and release of proposal requests, assistance with contracting service providers, providing matching funds up to \$25,000 toward provider's services (50/50 matching), and monitoring provider performance to assure client firm receives expected results. The implementation of projects is on a cost-shared basis. The MB:S2T program pays 50% of the cost of service providers up to \$25,000 (toward \$50,000 of project costs).

The Michigan Business: Surviving to Thrive (MB:S2T) program offers a lengthy list of projects that could be cost-shared. They fall in the areas of marketing and sales, industrial and systems engineering, financial and general management. Marketing and Sales, for instance, includes analysis of competition, sales blitz assistance, web site development, new product introduction, market research, marketing material development, sales strategy, product line evaluation and much more. Industrial and Systems Engineering includes productivity improvement, employee skills training, lean manufacturing initiatives, CAD/CAM, quality assurance programs, Six Sigma Training, inventory control/reduction, energy use reduction, material handling methods and more. Financial and General Management includes cash flow analysis, profit planning, budgeting, strategic planning, management skills training, purchasing and vendor management, TQM, TPS, ToC, TLS training and much more.

To learn more about the MB:S2T Program and whether your firm might qualify, contact Cathy Knapp, Executive Director, St. Joseph County EDC at knapp@stjosephcountymi.org or Steven B. Wilson, Director, at sbwilson@umich.edu or (734) 998-6221, John Antos, Project Manager, jantos@umich.edu or (734) 998-6227, Tom Bellinson, Project Manager, tjbelli@umich.edu or (734) 998-6581, or Stephanie Little, Project Manager, stli@umich.edu or (734) 998-6640.