

PRESS RELEASE February 15, 2008

CONTACT: Katherine E. Arno

Director of Training and Communication, Maine Small Business Development Centers

Phone 207-780-4853

E-mail: karno@maine.edu

Project Aims to Stem Loss of Manufacturing in Maine

Maine manufacturers facing challenges in international competition and lagging economic conditions can access a new Maine program to help them strengthen their market position. The Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC) has designed a 10-week program, called, "The Successful Business Plan: Your Fast Track to the Next Level," to target small manufacturers who need to respond to these pressures quickly. The program helps manufacturers revise their strategic direction, plan growth, and establish priorities, with a combination of one-on-one business counseling and training. The sessions begin March 29, 2008, and conclude in June..

"The goal of the program is that at the end of 10 weeks, each participating manufacturer will have completed a blockbuster business plan," said Maine SBDC Interim State Director, Meriby Sweet, "This business plan lets a business reposition the company in the marketplace, or revise its product line, carve a new marketplace niche or find new customers."

To design the program, Maine SBDC received a competitive U.S. Small Business Administration grant. According to Sweet, the SBA grant is focused on addressing distressed business sectors, such as Maine's ailing manufacturing, which has been downsizing since 2000, significantly impacting unemployment rates, poverty, and related community small businesses.

Senator Olympia Snowe's office reports that over 20,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Maine since the beginning of this century's recession through 2006. This was exacerbated when Maine lost 39 factories during 2006, according to the 2007 [Maine Manufacturers Register](#), a directory published annually by Manufacturers' News, Inc. The Maine SBDC program will assist up to 20 small manufacturers. "We've added many new components to our training and counseling so that manufacturers can easily complete their business plan within 10 weeks," said Maine SBDC Director of Training & Communications, Katherine Arno. She said the project will use a blended training approach, combining on-site and online training modules that meet participants' need for flexibility and convenience. Participating manufacturers will also have opportunities to meet and learn from successful Maine manufacturers who have utilized a redefining business plan to launch, significantly grow, and adjust to market conditions. Maine SBDC certified business counselors will provide up to 15 hours of one-on-one business counseling and will work with participants to guide them through each phase of the business plan writing.

Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) is offering at no charge to each company that graduates from the 10-week course up to 8 hours of MEP services.

These services may include operational/lean assessment, a quality management system review, a plant layout review and other services. Maine SBDC is working with the Maine MEP to identify manufacturers for the project.

Because it is grant-funded, the cost to participating manufacturers is only \$100. To register or for more information, call 1-800-679-SBDC or visit www.mainesbdc.org.

About Maine Small Business Development Centers/Maine Small Business & Technology Development Centers (Maine SBDC/SBTDC): *Maine SBDC/SBTDC is a partnership program of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) in association with the SBA/OSBDC, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, the University of Southern Maine, and leading economic and/or community development hosting organizations, including the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, Coastal Enterprises, Inc., Eastern Maine Development Corporation, and the Northern Maine Development Commission and with support from the Maine Technology Institute (MTI) and other contractors, allies and stakeholders. Accredited by the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC) and administered by USM's School of Business, Maine SBDC/SBTDC operates a network of service centers and outreach offices located conveniently throughout the state. ###*