



SEEKING LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS FOR OPPORTUNITY TO VIE FOR UP TO \$25,000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Gaylord, MI), January 6, 2020 - Otsego County Economic Alliance, Inc. (OCEA) is pleased to announce the opening of the 2020 round of "Accelerate Otsego", Otsego County's 2nd annual pitch event competition.

"Accelerate Otsego" is a partnership among several local and state partners to grow entrepreneurship through providing business plan development and pitch assistance that will culminate in a pitch night on April 16, 2020 at Gornick Auditorium in Gaylord where competitors will vie for up to **\$25,000** in award funding to assist their new business.

Applications are available beginning January 6, 2020 at either the Otsego County Economic Alliance's offices located in the Otsego County Courthouse building at 225 W. Main Street, or Gaylord Area Chamber of Commerce offices located 319 W. Main Street. Applications will be accepted through January 31, 2020 and require a \$75 non-refundable application fee to assist with program expenses. Only 10 businesses will be chosen for this opportunity.

The program will begin February 17, 2020 where representatives from the Small Business Development Center and mentors from SCORE will provide 2 hour assistance one night a week for 5 weeks to help competing entrepreneurs with their business plans and pitch.

Applicant requirements are that the business must be organized, a for-profit, be either new or in operation less than 2 years, be based in Otsego County and looking to either start-up or enhance its products or services.

"Offering a pitch event such as "Accelerate Otsego" allows OCEA and our partners to provide specific business development tools and resources to our local entrepreneurs along with seed funding that allows them in turn to provide unique or needed businesses to our communities. With the large economic development we are experiencing throughout Otsego County, as well as immediately to the South and East of us, we continue to field requests from community members seeking additional businesses, services, and products. The first annual "Accelerate Otsego" pitch event launched in 2019 saw 13 new businesses apply with 10 selected to participate and pitch their business. These events have been very successful throughout Northern Michigan in incentivizing entrepreneurs to venture into business in their own communities" said Lisa McComb, Executive Director for OCEA.

Through generous financial support from local partners and sponsors which include DTE, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments, the Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau, and Consumers Energy, grant funding of \$25,000 was raised to deploy through 5 awards at this year's event. **Award levels are First Place - \$10,000, Second Place - \$7,500, Third Place - \$5,000, and People's Choice \$2,500.**

For more information about this program and event contact OCEA at 989-731-0287.

