



SEEKING LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS FOR OPPORTUNITY TO VIE FOR \$26,500

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Gaylord, MI), January 22, 2019 - Otsego County Economic Alliance, Inc. (OCEA), the Gaylord Area Chamber of Commerce and the Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau have partnered to launch Otsego County's first pitch event competition. "Accelerate Otsego" is a combined effort to grow entrepreneurship through providing business plan development and pitch assistance that will culminate in a pitch night on April 11, 2019 at Gornick Auditorium in Gaylord where competitors will vie for over **\$26,500** in award funding to assist their business.

Applications are available beginning January 21, 2019 at either the Otsego County Economic Alliance's offices located in the Otsego County Courthouse building on Main Street, or Gaylord Area Chamber of Commerce offices located on Main Street. Applications will be accepted through February 8, 2019 and require a \$50 non-refundable application fee to assist with program expenses. The program will begin February 18, 2019 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 pitch 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.

Taylor Akin, Executive Director for the Gaylord Area Chamber of Commerce stated that "Through the generous financial support from our local partners such as Consumers Energy, Huntington Bank, DTE, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments, Otsego Community Foundation and Fifth Third Bank, we were able raise grant funding of \$26,500 to deploy through 5 awards at the event, as well as an **additional \$8,000 of in-kind contributions** of radio advertising from Black Diamond, Chamber services, and marketing products that winners will receive to support their business." **Award levels are First Place - \$10,000, Second Place - \$7,500, Third Place - \$5,000, Inspiring Young Entrepreneur (Age 21-25) - \$2,500 and People's Choice \$1,500.**

Paul Beachnau, Executive Director of the Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau noted that "We are hopeful that this event attracts businesses in all industries including Tourism. Our County is fortunate to have so many diverse natural resources around us that draws people from all over the Country. We would love to see more businesses take advantage of our natural setting and provide unique businesses to showcase these resources. We believe this is event is an opportunity to launch those unique business".

For more information about this program and event contact either the OCEA at 989-731-0287, the Gaylord Area Chamber of Commerce at 98-732-6333 or the Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau at 989-732-4000.



Northeast Michigan Council of Governments

