



Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor / Jack Lavin, Director

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Governor Announces Launch Of Entrepreneurship Center Network

CHICAGO - Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced the opening of the Chicago West Side Entrepreneurship Center located at 700 N. Sacramento Boulevard, Suite 130. The University of Illinois - Chicago (UIC), along with Chicago Community Ventures (CCV), a non-profit business development organization, will serve as the state's partners in the delivery of a broad range of traditional and enhanced services.

"Entrepreneurial activity has become one of the most important job growth engines of the national economy. Providing a local culture of support to entrepreneurs in their business ventures is a crucial element to creating good jobs in Illinois and building a more vibrant economy throughout our state," Governor Blagojevich said.

The Chicago West Side Entrepreneurship Center (CWSEC) is designed to be a new, regional hub for coordinating all small business development, entrepreneurship training and entrepreneurship development activity, building on the existing infrastructure of the Small Business Development Center Network, the Illinois Technology Enterprise Center Network and the Manufacturing Extension Center Network. The CWSEC will serve the west side of Chicago, generally described as the area between the Kennedy Expressway on the North, Cermak Road on the South, the city of Chicago limits on the West, and State street on the East. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is administering this new initiative.

"The Entrepreneurship Center Network will provide entrepreneurs with the expertise, networks and tools they need to make their ventures successful. Additionally, the CWSEC will help diversify the local economy, commercialize technologies, create jobs and build wealth in a historically underserved region," said DCEO Director Jack Lavin.

The CWSEC will not duplicate existing services; rather, it will serve as an umbrella organization to coordinate services and programs currently available, as well as provide targeted accelerated services to those companies that have high growth potential. Partnering with UIC will allow the CWSEC and the entrepreneurs it serves to tap into the abundance of resources and know-how already in place in a public university setting, thereby enhancing the long-term growth and viability of these young companies. Furthermore, CCV will bring a trusted and well-respected community presence to this initiative. CCV will be responsible for responding to inquiries from entrepreneurs and companies, developing needs assessments and action plans for clients, and maintaining a client tracking system among other services.

Margaret Unetich is serving as the Interim Director of the CWSEC. She is responsible for assessing the needs of clients, coordinating and tracking the delivery of services to clients throughout the network and presenting grant applications to the awards committee. Ms. Unetich was previously the CCV's Small Business Development Center Director, where she provided consulting services to clients, oversaw CCV's satellite Business Resource locations, coordinated CCV's workshops and developed CCV's reporting system. She is a member of the Illinois Small Business Development Network, the Illinois Small Business Development Association, the Community Development Venture Capital Alliance, and a board member of the Illinois Managing Angel Network Association. Ms. Unetich received degrees from Miami University (B.A., International Studies; B.A., French), a Masters of Business Administration (concentrations: Entrepreneurship and Strategy) and a Masters of Public Policy from the University of Chicago.

Potential clients are encouraged to contact the CWSEC at 773-722-8165 or via email at cwsec@chiventures.org. Further information on available programs and services can be accessed at the CWSEC's Web site: www.cwsec.org.

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