



SARASOTA COUNTY FLORIDA BUSINESS SERVICES GUIDE

Business Services Guide

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Introduction

The Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County (EDC) is pleased to provide you with this guide to help your business grow and prosper. Contacts for programs outside the EDC are included below where appropriate. Of course, if you have questions on any of the programs or organizations included in this publication, please feel free to call the EDC at 941.309.1200. You can also visit us at: www.edcsarasotacounty.com.

LINK

The EDC of Sarasota County's LINK system is a business assistance helpline established to aid local businesses with any issue that may hinder or prevent their growth and prosperity. Businesses requiring assistance can call LINK at 941.309.1200, Ext. 123 or visit www.edcsarasotacounty.com to access LINK online and receive help within 24 business hours.

EXPANSION ASSISTANCE

S.M.A.R.T. Program (Rapid Permitting)

In cooperation with Sarasota County government, the EDC has developed a rapid response permitting process that assists companies in expediting site development and construction permits for their new buildings. This program can, under certain circumstances, assist companies whose facility sites need platting, rezones, special exceptions, and sector plan amendments. Sarasota County also works with the state expedited permitting process on projects of significant economic impact.

Buildings and Sites Database

The EDC has a comprehensive database of properties available for rent and sale. This database can be accessed through our web site at www.edcsarasotacounty.com.

Impact Fee Mitigation Program

Sarasota County has adopted a program that, in some cases, will completely eliminate road impact fees for certain businesses expanding in the county. The program is designed to assist businesses that will benefit the local economy, as identified by the County Commission. The EDC will work closely with companies to assist them with the application for impact fee mitigation.

Economic Development Transportation Fund Grant

Grants through the Economic Development Transportation Fund are available for projects where financial assistance may be needed for transportation enhancements facilitating economic development. Funds may be used for road design and engineering costs, transportation project construction costs, and traffic signals. The maximum award amount is \$2 million.

FINANCING AND INCENTIVES

Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program

This program is designed to encourage quality job growth in targeted value-added businesses and provides tax refunds to pre-approved applicants of up to \$5,000 per new job created (minimum of 10 jobs required). Successful applicants will pay an average wage that is at least 15 percent above the local average wage and meet other qualifying criteria. Taxes eligible for refunds include corporate income, sales, ad valorem, insurance premium and other taxes.

Industrial Revenue Bonds

A popular alternative among the growing financially sophisticated business communities in Florida, IRBs provide low interest, market-rate driven capital for business expansion, new building construction and business equipment needs. Typically IRBs are available for the manufacturing sector of the business community.

Enterprise Bonds

Enterprise Bond financing enables small manufacturers to access attractive interest rate financing. Financing for individual borrowers is grouped together into a larger pooled bond issue. The pooling of loans helps spread the costs of issuance over many smaller borrowers that may otherwise find it cost-prohibitive to seek tax-exempt financing under traditional IRB criteria.

BusinessFundingResource.com

The www.businessfundingresource.com web site identifies available capital and financing sources for existing businesses and start-up companies.

Small Business Administration 504 Loan Program

Construction loans equal to 90 percent of the approved project costs can be obtained through the SBA 504 Program. Favorable interest rates are also available to qualifying projects. The EDC can arrange for expanding businesses to talk with local bank representatives who can assist with the application process.

Enterprise Zone

An Enterprise Zone designated for the City of Sarasota and Sarasota County is geared towards economic revitalization and business assistance. The Enterprise Zone offers financial incentives to businesses that choose to locate in the zone and/or employ residents who live in the zone.

Brownfields Community Redevelopment Program

As part of the County's redevelopment and growth management strategy, the Brownfields Community Redevelopment Program provides assistance and incentives to public and private land owners and businesses to facilitate the owner's environmental cleanup and reuse of contaminated urban property.

WORKFORCE ASSISTANCE

Recruitment Assistance Program

The EDC is committed to assisting local businesses in the recruitment of the workforce they need to be successful. The EDC's recruitment assistance program includes an Internet Job and Resume Database, which can be accessed through www.jobfocus.com. This free service allows local employers to post job openings and job seekers to post resumes online. The EDC also informs local businesses of job fair opportunities, helps locate skills-upgrade training grants, assists with information and relocation kits for recruiting purposes and works with local educational institutions on the recruitment of students for internships and permanent positions.

Suncoast Workforce Board - Jobs ETC

The Suncoast Workforce Board offers a One-Stop Career Center initiative in Sarasota and Manatee Counties called Jobs ETC. Each center offers a seamless system of job placement and assistance to employers and job seekers alike. The Business Services division of Jobs ETC provides numerous workforce services to employers including job posting, applicant screening, job fairs and linkage to other programs and services. For more information, please visit www.swdb.org.

Suncoast Workforce Information

Comprehensive workforce data for Sarasota and Manatee County employers is available by visiting <http://fred.labormarketinfo.com>. This web site contains wage data, online recruitment assistance, and a wealth of industry and workforce intelligence.

Quick Response Training Grant

Training grants are available to Sarasota County businesses that meet certain criteria, including creating new, high-quality jobs and producing goods or services for markets outside of the county. The EDC can assist local businesses by arranging appointments with training providers such as the Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI) or Manatee Community College (MCC).

Other Training Grants

Additional training grants to upgrade the skills of current employees are also available. These programs offer another advantage – customized training. By working closely with the area's educational institutions, employers can create new opportunities to strengthen the skills of their employees.

Customized Training

Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI) and Manatee Community College (MCC) offer occupational-technical training programs that can be designed for individual businesses on an as-needed basis. Both of these training and education providers have worked to make classroom and on-the-job training within easy reach for most employees.

GOVERNMENTAL ISSUES PROGRAM

LINK

The EDC has established a business assistance service called LINK to assist local businesses with expansion, permitting, workforce training, governmental issues or any condition that may hinder or prevent their growth and prosperity. Calls to the helpline will be returned within 24 hours during the normal work week. Call 941.309.1200, Ext. 123 or visit www.edcsarasotacounty.com to access LINK online.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Manufacturing Assistance

The EDC, through the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership (FMEP), helps small-to-medium-size companies identify barriers to productivity and implement solutions and provide program management in a cost-effective manner. The FMEP provides manufacturing engineering, technical and management assistance in numerous areas to help improve profitability, productivity and competitiveness for the Florida manufacturing community.

USF Connect

USF Connect is your link to a wide range of small business development services available at the University of South Florida (USF). It was created to provide a single point of contact for resources like technology, financing, marketing, management, partners and support services that can accelerate and support the growth of your business. For more information contact the university at 813.866.3802 or visit www.research.usf.edu.

Florida High Tech Corridor Council

The Florida High Tech Corridor Council's mission is to attract, retain and grow high tech industry, and to help develop the workforce to support those industries within the 23-county service areas of the University of Central Florida (UCF), the University of South Florida (USF) and the University of Florida (UF). The primary focus of the Florida High Tech Corridor Council (FHTCC) has been to foster applied research between Corridor

universities and their high tech industry partners. The majority of the Council's funding has been allocated to this effort. Successful companies have obtained grants for applied research projects in a variety of disciplines including: agritechology; aviation and aerospace; digital media/interactive entertainment; financial services; information technology; life sciences/biotechnology; microelectronics/nanotechnology; modeling, simulation and training; optics and photonics; and sustainable energy. For more information, call 407.562.1910 or visit www.floridahightech.com.

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program

The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program encourages small businesses to engage in federal research and development with the potential to commercialize the resulting product. SBIR eligibility criteria: American-owned and independently operated, for-profit, principal researcher must be employed by business, and the business must have 500 or fewer employees. Following submission of proposals, agencies make SBIR awards based on small business qualifications, degree of innovation, technical merit, and future market potential. For more information, contact the EDC at 941.309.1200 or visit www.sba.gov/sbir.

Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Program

The Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Program facilitates cooperative research and development between small businesses and U.S. research institutions with the potential to commercialize the resulting product. STTR eligibility criteria: American-owned and independently operated, for-profit, principal researcher need not be employed by small business, company size limit is 500 employees (no size limit for nonprofit research institution). Nonprofit research institutions must also meet certain eligibility criteria: must be located in the US; and must be either nonprofit college or university, domestic nonprofit research organization, or federally funded research and development center. For more information, contact the EDC at 941.309.1200 or visit www.sba.gov/sbir.

OTHER BUSINESS RESOURCE PROGRAMS

Export Assistance

Assistance for local companies wishing to export their product or service is available from a number of resources. The EDC can assist local businesses in accessing the following services: Enterprise Florida International Trade Export Services, which provides consulting on marketing products or services internationally; Florida Trade Database, which is a state-supported initiative to assist Florida companies in identifying specific trade leads or product sources and; The Florida District Export Council and the Department of Commerce's Export Assistance Center, which provide technical, financial and consulting assistance to small exporters. The Electronic Trade Leads Network allows export-ready companies to access trade leads via the Enterprise Florida web site. The Trade Leads Network lists foreign companies who want to buy goods or services from Florida companies at www.eFlorida.com.

Small Business Development Center at MCC

The Small Business Development Center at Manatee Community College provides counseling, training and research to start new small businesses or to grow existing small businesses. You may access their website at www.mccfl.edu/pages/324.asp or telephone 941.408.1413.

Small Business Development Center at USF

The University of South Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC) provides information, guidance and counseling for small business startups. Contact the SBDC at 941.408.1412 for more information.

Online Entrepreneur Resources Guide

Whether you are a seasoned entrepreneur or on your way to becoming one, this one-stop entrepreneur resource guide will help you at every stage of your business. You'll find everything from the basics of starting a business, to expansion assistance and ongoing education resources. For more information, go to www.suncoastbizresource.com

Coordination and Cooperation

All of the programs listed above are administered, coordinated or supported by the EDC. The EDC is an investor-supported organization that serves as Sarasota County's public/private partnership for economic development.

OUR PARTNERS INCLUDE

Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce

Venice Area Chamber of Commerce

Englewood-Cape Haze Area Chamber of Commerce

North Port Area Chamber of Commerce

Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce

Longboat Key, Lido Key & St. Armands Key Chamber
of Commerce

Sarasota African-American Chamber of Commerce

Gulf Coast Latin Chamber of Commerce

The Cities of Sarasota, Venice and North Port

The Town of Longboat Key

Sarasota County Government

Sarasota County Technical Institute

Suncoast Workforce Board

Enterprise Florida

Tampa Bay Partnership

Manatee Community College

Sarasota-Manatee Manufacturers Association

Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership

University of South Florida Small Business

Development Center

Manatee Economic Development Council

Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau

Sarasota County Arts Council

82 Degrees Tech



Contact LINK the Business Assistance Helpline:

941.309.1200, Ext. 123
or visit www.edcsarasotacounty.com

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