



Eastern West Virginia
Community & Technical College

NEWS RELEASE

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EASTERN SPURS SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH WITH HP TECH GRANT

A prestigious grant of nearly 60-thousand dollars in equipment and cash from information technology giant Hewlett-Packard will fuel a local college's plans to offer computer and software training to very small businesses in the Potomac Highlands.

In partnership with the Potomac Highlands Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Eastern WV Community and Technical College will set up a series of training workshops that will focus on how very small start-up or existing businesses can use computer technology and software to enhance their business skills and to improve their productivity and profits.

"HP is committed to developing micro-enterprises in underserved and rural areas," said Sherry Watts, Associate Dean for Workforce Education at Eastern WV Community and Technical College. "And they define micro-enterprise as any business that has five or fewer employees and only \$35-thousand or less in start-up capital, and that lacks access to the traditional banking sector."

Starting in January, 2008, and open to all small businesses in Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral, Pendleton and Tucker counties that fit the definition of a micro-enterprise, the trainings will cover the software programs considered most essential to business needs, including the standard applications for accounting (QuickBooks), as well as word processing, spread sheets and data bases (Microsoft Office suite). The workshops will also provide training on technological strategies for media and marketing, and on designing and building a website for e-commerce options.

Announcements of specific trainings, said Watts, with their dates and locations, will appear soon.

Watts also pointed to a recent Small Business Administration study that found "unparalleled new opportunities for small businesses" that learned to bridge their business skills to new technologies, and specifically to the Internet and online sales. "The SBA reported that the greatest benefit from online commerce goes to the smallest firms," Watts said, "and that the expense to set up and maintain a web site is minimal."

And because the younger generations surf the Internet and use computer technology as readily as their parents do the dial telephone and the yellow pages, e-business offers the prospect of strong future growth.

"Even if a business does not currently use or own computer equipment, it can still take advantage of this training," noted Beth Ludewig, SBDC manager, "because the grant includes a generous number of state-of-the-art HP notebook and tablet computers."

Looking to spur business profitability and entrepreneurship in underserved communities, the HP Microenterprise Development Grant strives to harness the power of information technology for the benefit and growth of very small businesses in the Potomac Highlands.

“The possibilities for entrepreneurs to improve their businesses are multiplied when an organization like Eastern can provide technical assistance,” said Deanna Ward, Program Manager, HP Global Philanthropy. “We’re pleased that HP’s contribution will promote microenterprise growth in the area.”

“In today’s business climate, technology isn’t just a leg up on the competition,” SBDC manager Ludewig emphasized. “It’s swiftly becoming a competitive necessity for survival and success.”

Serving the residents of Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral, Pendleton and Tucker counties, Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College is a comprehensive and equal opportunity community and technical college bringing the resources and assets of Education That Works to the families, communities and employers of the Potomac Highlands.