



2016 Ropp Triplett Business Plan Competition

What is the Bluffton Center for Entrepreneurs? Simply put, we're business incubators. We provide programs that add value to young businesses, accelerate their growth, and increase the odds of their success — that's business incubation.

The Bluffton Center for Entrepreneurs (BCE) is a not-for-profit business support center offering professional assistance and customized programs to entrepreneurs and small businesses in Allen, Hancock, Hardin and Putnam counties.

CONTESTS

1. STARTUPS AND EMERGING BUSINESS CONTEST

The competition is open to startups and emerging businesses less than 2 years old OR under \$20,000 in annual revenues and located in the four-county area: Allen, Hancock, Hardin and Putnam.

Contest participation includes enrollment in a seven-session course designed to help you create a complete business plan suitable for presentation to lenders or investors. Participation at all seven seminars is strongly recommended, but not required for entry to the competition.

Must submit application form and fee by January 20.

Must present plan to judges in March.

2. BLUFFTON SMALL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT CONTEST

The Bluffton Small Business Improvement Contest is provided to allow business leaders to add/grow/develop enterprises, which contribute to increase in sales, jobs and traffic to their business and Bluffton.

Business must be located in the 45817 zip code.

Contest participation includes enrollment in a seven-session course designed to help you create a complete business plan suitable for presentation to lenders or investors. Participation in 3 of the seven seminars is strongly recommended, but not required for entry to the competition.

Must submit application form and fee by January 20.

Must present plan to judges in March.

WINNERS ANNOUNCED

MARCH 17 BACC/BCE BUSINESS AFTER-HOURS NETWORKING EVENT

Contestants will receive free admission and free table to promote their business.

FINALIST PRIZES

START-UPS AND EMERGING BUSINESS

First Place \$4,000

Second Place \$1,000

Third Place \$500

SMALL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT

First Place \$1,000
First pick of two in-kind services

Second Place Pick of in-kind service

SEVEN-SESSION BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS

Seminars will be held Wednesday evenings from 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 13, to March 8, in the third floor meeting room of the Bluffton Town Hall, 154 North Main Street, Bluffton. All seminars will be instructed by Kathy Keller, Director, Small Business Development Center at Rhodes State College, Lima, Ohio.

Jan. 13: "Launch Your Business Right" FREE SESSION

Thursday, Jan. 21: "So You Want to be an Entrepreneur" *Fees/application due*

Jan. 27: "Planning to Start a Business"

Feb. 3: "Developing Your Business Idea"

Feb. 10: "Testing Your Business Idea and getting it to Market"

Feb. 17: "Accounting for Your Business"

Feb. 24: "Financing Your Business"

March 2: "Final Pitch Dress Rehearsal" Business plan due

March 9: FINAL PITCHES

PRIZE SUMMARY

- All competitors receive a one "Think Tank" session with BCE Board of Directors and a Bluffton Area Chamber of Commerce membership. Offer valid until March 31, 2017.
- Money - The prize money will be disbursed as reimbursements for legitimate business expenses or as payments of the business's vendor invoices. Prize money must be claimed by December 31, 2017.
- In-kind Services - Value up to \$500 each.

These prizes are subject to change at the sponsor or competition organizers discretion at any time. Offer is valid until March 31, 2017 unless other arrangements have been made with the sponsor.

- Advertising
 - Advertising package available from area newspapers, websites, theatres, radio and television stations.
- Marketing Support
 - Logo development
 - Social Media training
 - Branding
- CPA
 - Tax Consulting
 - QuickBooks or other financial software training
 - New business filing assistance
- Event Planning
 - BACC/BCE staff help facilitate their first special event
 - Open house, seminar, workshop etc.
 - One time use of BACC mailing list for invites/promotion
- Access to Loan Program
 - Bank 0% closing cost
 - Darcy Fund

ADDITIONAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

- 1) Award winners from previous business plan competitions may not re-apply for the START-UPS AND EMERGING BUSINESS CONTEST but can apply for the BLUFFTON SMALL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT CONTEST (and is located in the 45817 zip code area).
- 2) Your business concept must be original work that you are able to fully disclose to the judges.
- 3) Your business plan must disclose how you will use the award to launch or grow your business. The prize money will be disbursed as reimbursements for legitimate business expenses or as payments of the business's vendor invoices.
- 4) The completed entry form with an attached overview of your concept and check for \$150.00 (payable to BCE), or \$75 for students, must be submitted to the BCE office or postmarked by Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2016.

**Only \$125 if your application and fee is received by December 31, 2015.*

- 5) Three copies of completed business plan must be received by the BCE staff on or before Wednesday, March 9, 2016.

JUDGING CRITERIA (100 possible points)

Workshop attendance

Written plan

- The business plan concept and products
- The market
- Operations
- Marketing
- Non-financial resource requirements
- Economics of the business
- Financials
- Overall document

Presentation

- Ability to capture audience attention
- Completeness of the presentation
- Mastery of facts and material related to venture
- Professionalism of the presentation
- Handling of questions

BLUFFTON SMALL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT CONTESTANTS

- Beneficial impact to Bluffton's economic growth and development such as increase in sales, jobs and traffic to their business and Bluffton.

BCE MISSION

The mission of the Bluffton Center for Entrepreneurs (BCE) is to provide resources – financial, intellectual, and technological – in partnership with local educators and business leaders that will facilitate and nurture growth of new and developing enterprises. Moreover, the center will ultimately enhance the greater Bluffton area, not only through job growth, but also by being a visible and sustainable sponsor and promoter of innovation that will continuously attract new entrepreneurs to the area.

BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION GOALS

- Create new jobs in northwest Ohio
- Nurture the development of entrepreneurial companies
- Help those companies survive during the start-up period when they are most vulnerable
- Retain businesses in our community
- Build growth in a local industry
- Diversify our local economies

CONTACTS

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will there be a confidentiality agreement?

A: No. The nature of the competition and involvement of staff, reviewers, judges, and other participants prevents BCE from guaranteeing confidentiality. However, we will limit distribution of the final business plans to judges and the BCE Executive Director.

Q: Are there restrictions on the type of business or service I provide?

A: No. We will accept business plans in any legal business category.