

Hi, this is Jennifer Budwig with today's community comment. Since 2006, I've served on the board of the North Coast Small Business Development Center, also known as SBDC. Every year, the local SBDC helps hundreds of businesses get started, grow and thrive in Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

Still, it seems that there are many business owners...or those who want to start businesses...that don't know about the SBDC and what it has to offer. So I'm using my community comment today to help get the word out about this great local nonprofit organization.

A majority of the services provided through the SBDC are of no charge. They offer 5 free business basics workshops which include Finance, Books & Records, Marketing, Startup and Business Planning. These are offered every month in Eureka and Crescent City and at times elsewhere in our region. They also occasionally offer special programs. As an example, there is a workshop series for niche tourism businesses currently underway as well as a program for artists trying to improve the business side of their work that will start later this spring in Crescent City.

I often refer people to the SBDC for their one on one business counseling services. As a business banker with Redwood Capital Bank, the SBDC can help my clients with any of their additional needs and answer questions as they arise. SBDC advisors are very experienced and helpful people who guide folks through the business process. Additionally, they contract with over three dozen other professionals when outside services are needed, such as using professionals for human resource guidance, marketing plans, graphic artists, Quickbooks expertise or website auditing. You can be assured you are receiving professional level services and since a majority of their services are free, there is no cost to you.

Another great resource, and one I regularly refer business owners to, is their website which is northcoastsbdc.org. You can access tools like checklists for starting business in the different cities within the two counties and the unincorporated areas, legal structure options for businesses and my favorite: Stilson's financial templates which provide everything from a loan calculator, projection template, breakeven analysis, and all kinds of nifty financial tools.

The SBDC can also assist with lots of other things such as guidance when it comes to hiring your first employee, or when you reach levels of employment where new regulations kick in; or if you're expanding and need to know your options for capital.

Almost all of our businesses headquartered in these two Counties are considered small businesses and are eligible for their services so you don't have to be a startup to qualify. And even though you don't have to be a start up, helping businesses get off the ground is where our local SBDC does some of its best work. If you're planning to open a business, you're a hero in this region where we count on our entrepreneurs, and the good people at the North Coast SBDC would like to work with you.

If any of this applies to you—or to a business person you know—please get in touch with the staff at the SBDC. Just Google North Coast S B D C and you'll find them. You can easily sign up for workshops, become a client for free one on one business counseling, or use the tools on the website itself. I think you'll be glad you did.

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