

March 12, 1999

MEMORANDUM

To: Presidents

From: Martin Lancaster

SUBJECT: Small Business Center Network Program Evaluation Instrument

As you are aware, over the past year, we have been working diligently to enhance the consistency and quality of our 58 Small Business Centers. Much of this effort has been focused around our Small Business Center Network State Advisory Committee, consisting of Presidents, SBC Directors, System and local college administration and small business owners. The Small Business Centers overall are providing an outstanding service for their small business communities, and the demands on the Centers are rapidly increasing. During the last two program years, we have seen a 29% increase in the number of Small Business Center clients statewide.

We all know that the Centers are long overdue for additional funding to help them even better serve the ever increasing small business population in North Carolina. This year, the State Board has requested \$1.6 million in additional funding for the Small Business Center Network. However, as the Governor and several legislators have pointed out, in order to obtain future funding increases, we must pay attention to the inconsistencies of Small Business Centers throughout the state, and make every effort to improve.

In an effort to address the issue, the State Board adopted new Small Business Center Network Program Guidelines on November 20, 1998 which required a regular evaluation process of all Centers in the state. Our staff in turn developed a standardized evaluation instrument as called for by the new guidelines, which was presented to and endorsed by the Small Business Center Network State Advisory Committee on February 10, 1999.

The instrument will serve as an evaluative tool in assessing the quality and productivity of our fifty-eight Small Business Centers. Beginning April, 1999, Gayle Harvey, SBCN State Program Director will begin the first phase of Center evaluations. She is now in the process of contacting various Small Business Centers to develop an evaluation schedule for the remainder of this program year.

We hope that she will be assisted in each evaluation by at least one other participant which may include the Regional Small Business Center Directors; Scott Ralls, the Director of Economic Development; or Rachel Smith, our SBCN State Advisory Committee Chairperson. Each evaluation will encompass a one-day site visit. They will evaluate approximately 15 Centers during this program year, looking at each Center's effort to carry out the intent and purpose of the North Carolina Community College System's State Board approved Small Business Center Network Program Guidelines which state that every Center must be evaluated at least once every four years. The results of the Center evaluation, including the ratings of the evaluation instrument and a written narrative, will be shared with your SBC Director and yourself.

While it is expected that a few of the SBCs may not be in complete compliance with the guidelines immediately, it is expected that the SBCs will have an initial plan in place to address the areas where they may have a deficit.

I appreciate your support for the Small Business Center Network in the past, and I look forward to working with you to improve the Small Business Centers' capabilities to increase the success rate and number of profitable small businesses in North Carolina.

Please give me a call if you have any questions or discussion regarding the evaluation instrument.

HML/GH/jmf
Attachment

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Paper Copy