



2016 Metro East Start-up Challenge offers \$20,000 in prizes

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EDWARDSVILLE - Entrepreneurs and new business startups are invited to compete in the 2016 Metro East Start-Up Challenge (MESC), [Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's](#) third annual regional business plan competition.

The Challenge is organized by the Illinois Metro East Small Business Development Center ([SBDC](#)). The purpose of the Challenge is to identify, encourage and support entrepreneurs and business startups across the SBDC's nine-county service area.

The first-place winner will receive a \$10,000 cash prize. Two runners-up will receive \$5,000 each. Prizewinners will also receive an array of in-kind professional services.

Sponsors include the SIUE School of Business, PNC Bank, St. Louis Regional Chamber, the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois, the Cities of Edwardsville and Columbia, Riverbend Growth Association, University Park at SIUE and Artigem. SIUE'

s School of Business, the SBDC's host organization, will assist with facilitating the competition.

“The Metro East Start-Up Challenge elevates the discussion of and support for entrepreneurship across our region,” said Jo Ann Di Maggio May, SBDC interim director. “The interest in the annual Challenge continues to grow with each passing year.”

The 2016 Challenge invites entrepreneurs and startup businesses from four target industries: information technology, manufacturing and health care. For a startup business enterprise to be eligible, it must have been established after April 30, 2012, and be headquartered in the Illinois portion of the St. Louis Metro region (Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph counties). For pre-venture entrepreneurs, proposed new business operations will need to be located within the same nine counties.

The Metro East Start-Up Challenge includes three rounds, beginning with a brief questionnaire and executive summary submittal that is open to all applications that meet the eligibility guidelines. Participants selected for the second round are invited to expand on their business idea by submitting a full business plan. The last round is the “final pitch” in front of a panel of business experts.

For more information on the 2016 Challenge or to initiate the application process, go to siue.edu/metroeaststartup. The entry deadline is Friday, September 9. Semi-finalists will be announced Friday, Sept. 16, with finalists notified on Friday, Oct. 21.

The Challenge will announce its cash prizewinners on Friday, Nov. 4.

The Illinois SBDC Network is a service to the community supported, in part, by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and the [SIUE School of Business](#).

SIUE operates two [Small Business Development Centers](#) and the [International Trade Center](#). All three Centers provide resources, information and support to entrepreneurs, and small business owners in the nine-county Metro East region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining new jobs, and encouraging new investment. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the SIUE School of Business and the University at large.

To learn how the SBDC can help your small business, contact the Metro East SBDC at (618) 650-2929 or sbdcedw@gmail.com.