



# **East St. Louis Café of Champions Challenge Offers \$3,000 in Prizes**

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EDWARDSVILLE – Caterers and restaurant entrepreneurs are invited to showcase their talents in the 2021 East St. Louis Café of Champions Challenge, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s first food industry business plan competition.

The opportunity is huge as the winning caterer or restaurateur receives the opportunity to operate their food business on the SIUE East St. Louis Higher Education Campus for students and the community to enjoy.

The competition is organized by SIUE East St. Louis Higher Education Campus and the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for the Metro East at SIUE. The purpose of the Challenge is to identify, encourage and support entrepreneurs and business in East St. Louis.

The winner will receive a \$1,500 cash prize, and a one-year rent- and utility-free commercial kitchen/café space on SIUE's East St. Louis Higher Education Campus. Runner-up and third place finishers will receive \$1,000 and \$500, respectively.

The Challenge is made possible through local sponsors, including the Illinois SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE, SIUE School of Business, National Development Council and First Bank.

The Competition includes three rounds, beginning with a brief questionnaire and executive summary submittal that is open to all applicants who meet the eligibility guidelines. Participants selected for the second round are invited to expand on their entrepreneurial concept by submitting a full business plan. These semifinalists are paired with business professionals who will mentor them throughout the competition and potentially beyond. The three finalists then participate in a taste test judging where a winner is chosen.

The initial entry deadline is Saturday, April 3. Semi-finalists will be announced Monday, April 12. Finalists will be notified on Sunday, May 30. The Challenge will announce its cash prize winners on Friday, June 10. The winner is expected to begin operation at the SIUE East St. Louis Higher Education Campus on July 1.

For more information on the East St. Louis Café of Champions Challenge or to initiate the application process, visit [app.reviewr.com/s1/site//SIUE\\_Cafe\\_Champions](http://app.reviewr.com/s1/site//SIUE_Cafe_Champions)

The Illinois SBDC for the Metro East assists start-up ventures, as well as existing businesses, headquartered in the nine-county region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and SIUE as a service to Illinois small businesses.

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining new jobs and encouraging new investment. It enhances the region's economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. 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 about the SBDC, contact the IL SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE at 618-650-2929.