

**2017 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 from and fee by January 18, 2017.

Must present plan to judges in March.

1. **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 area 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 18, 2017.

Must present plan to judges in March.

**WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

**Thursday, MARCH 23, 2017 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 in-kind service

Second Place Pick of in-kind service valued at $500

**SEVEN-SESSION BUSINESS DEVELOMENT SEMINARS**

Seminars will be held Wednesday evenings from 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 11, to March 16, 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. 11: “Launch Your Business Right”

Jan. 18: “So You Want to be an Entrepreneur” Fees/application due

Jan. 25: “Planning to Start a Business”

Feb. 1: “Developing Your Business Idea”

Feb. 8: “Testing Your Business Idea and getting it to Market”

Feb. 15: “Accounting for Your Business”

Feb. 22: “Financing Your Business”

Feb. 24: 1st Draft of Business Plan due to Kathy

March 1: One on One with Kathy

March 3: Revised Draft of Business Plan due to dress rehearsal judges

March 8 & 9: “Final Pitch Dress Rehearsal”

March 10: Final Business Plan due to FINAL JUDGES

March 15 & 16: 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.
* 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.
	+ 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 area code).
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, January 18, 2017.

*\*Only $125 if your application and fee is received by December 31, 2016.*

1. Business plan must be emailed to the BCE staff on or before Wednesday, March 3, 2017.

**Judging Criteria**

Written plan (50 possible points)

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

Presentation (50 possible points)

* + 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

**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.

