



Entrepreneurial Pathways Program

Questions & Answers

What is the Entrepreneurial Pathways Program (EPP)?

The EPP, started in Santa Rosa in 2006, has been functioning as a virtual business incubator serving startup companies through mentoring, coaching, technical advising, education, financial planning, networking opportunities and introductions to potential investors, partners, customers and service providers. Many EPP companies have gone on to make presentations at the award winning North Bay Growth & Innovation Forum, North Bay Investors Summit as well as other investor venues, resulting in investment funding.

The Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce has formed an Entrepreneurial Pathways Program adapted from the Santa Rosa model. The Healdsburg EPP will work with startup and second stage entrepreneurial companies in businesses suitable to the Healdsburg economic environment. The Healdsburg EPP will collaborate with the Santa Rosa EPP to host educational, networking and investor events.

What are the goals of the EPP?

The EPP's goal is to create jobs through stimulation of the entrepreneurial economy in the Healdsburg area. It seeks to reinvigorate local industry and business returning them to their former level of impact on our local economy.

Which companies would benefit from EPP participation?

Businesses that have the potential to scale are the intended beneficiaries of the EPP. The EPP supports companies that can create jobs and wealth in the Healdsburg area. The EPP works with companies that range from pre-embryonic (still in the concept phase), through the various stages of startup, to second stage entrepreneurial companies (small existing companies embarking upon a growth initiative).

What benefits should a company participating in the EPP expect?

- *Mentoring: The Chamber calls upon senior executive volunteers who share their practical management experience on how to manage and grow businesses. As*

needed, the EPP committee will identify temporary senior management to fill positions on an interim basis.

- *Coaching: Through its extensive roster of membership volunteers, the Chamber provides coaching and management assistance in all business aspects including legal, accounting, finance, real estate, permitting, product development, marketing, sales, operations and manufacturing.*
- *Technical Advising: The Chamber identifies resources within its membership as well as from world-class providers and research facilities in the greater Bay Area to assist with technical issues.*
- *Networking: The Chamber organizes networking events that range from practical education to meeting professionals to sharing experiences with other entrepreneurs.*
- *Financing: The Chamber works with local Angel Investor and Venture Capital groups, as well as traditional banks, to help craft the most appropriate financing packages. The Healdsburg Chamber, in partnership with the City of Santa Rosa and the Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce, organizes the award winning North Bay Growth, Innovation and Venture Forum. These semi-annual forums bring entrepreneurial companies and potential investors together in a setting conducive to networking and education. The seven forums held to date have all had significant EPP company participation.*

What distinguishes the EPP from other mentoring programs?

The EPP is distinguished from other business mentoring programs in that it can call on a vast array of business professionals, in all aspect of business, from among the Chamber's 750 members to provide the necessary expertise to assist the entrepreneurial enterprise. The Chamber's membership also has extensive ties to expertise throughout the greater Bay Area further enhancing the value of its mentoring, coaching and advising. In addition, participation in the EPP is essentially cost-free.

Where does the EPP fit in the landscape of local business assistance programs?

The EPP is complementary to other business assistance programs within Sonoma County. Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University provide academic coursework in business and entrepreneurship. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and its Sawyer Center provide practical coursework in small business principles, operations, patents and trademarks. The Sonoma Mountain Business Cluster (SMBC) is a traditional bricks-and-mortar business incubator providing a full array of entrepreneurial services as well as turnkey office space for startup companies in sustainable resources and socially-relevant technologies. As a virtual business incubator the Healdsburg EPP also provides a full array of entrepreneurial services, but without offering dedicated office space. The EPP is complementary to SMBC in that it is a "straddle play" working with companies that do not fit within SMBC's scope including pre-embryonic (too young), startups who already have or need a different kind of space, and second stage entrepreneurs (too big and would have already graduated from a traditional incubator). The Healdsburg EPP is collaborative with the Santa Rosa EPP, each one having a geographical slant both in location and types of businesses supported.

The Healdsburg EPP, Santa Rosa EPP and SMBC will work together to produce a variety of events of value and importance to the entrepreneurial community.

How did the complementary relationship between the Healdsburg EPP, the Santa Rosa EPP and SMBC come to be?

The Sonoma Mountain Business Cluster was designed by Jerry Gladstone, its Founding Executive Director. Jerry has also been instrumental in shaping the Santa Rosa Chamber's Entrepreneurial Pathways Program and he has assisted in creating the Healdsburg EPP. Jerry firmly believes that the network of traditional and virtual business incubators will best serve the needs of the North Bay entrepreneurial community.

What does it cost to participate in the EPP?

Aside from the requirement to be a member of the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce, there are no fees or costs for any EPP services provided. We do ask that after a company graduates and is successful that they contribute to the support of the program to benefit a future generation of entrepreneurs.

How does a company apply to be an EPP participant?

Start by telephoning Herb Liberman to discuss whether your company or business concept is within the EPP's scope. If it is you will be asked to submit an executive summary or business plan for review. You will then be assisted in preparing materials for a presentation before a selection committee. During this session you will receive immediate feedback followed a few days later by a written evaluation and possible invitation to become an EPP participant.

How can local businesses help?

Established businesses in the community can help in many ways.

- *Referrals – send us promising companies that can potentially benefit from EPP participation.*
- *Volunteer time and expertise – join the committee to offer advice and expertise; teach a seminar on a practical business skill or knowledge.*
- *Participation in events – come to our events, lead a session, network.*
- *Sponsorship – sponsor an event or an aspect of the EPP.*

How to find out more.

Please contact the Healdsburg chamber of Commerce:

Herb Liberman at herb@healdsburg.com, 707-318-3101 or 707-433-8234

Also, see the EPP section within the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce's website at www.healdsburg.biz/EPP.

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