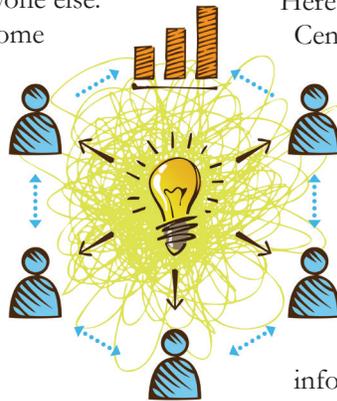


Better information, better decisions — and a better way to help your company!

You know more about your company than anyone else. But like most CEOs you could probably use some help when it comes to decisions about new markets, generating sales leads or deriving more value from your website. We realize you wouldn't typically look to economic development or entrepreneur support organizations for this type of help but that may be changing as we implement Economic Gardening® networks.

Economic Gardening represents a new way of thinking about supporting growth companies and letting business owners know how important they are to our local economies. So instead of offering traditional incentives like tax credits or real estate discounts, we're offering something that might be even more valuable to you: information — strategic information — gathered with your guidance and specifically for your company. We've observed this model in many other areas around the country and seen what kind of impressive results it produces.



Here's how it works: Partnering with the National Center for Economic Gardening, we've set up networks to provide virtual access to teams of highly skilled research specialists that will be matched with a select group of qualifying companies. Using private conference calls and a secure online workspace this team will interview the company to help identify specific issues. The team devotes about 36 hours to each company over the course of a few weeks as they work quickly to deliver action-oriented information.

We emphasize the phrase "select group of qualifying companies" because this program is available only to companies that meet certain criteria — and is offered to them at no cost. As a growing company, you make a positive impact on our local economy. We want to help you make an even bigger impact. Economic Gardening services are specifically designed to help growing companies make better decisions while navigating the challenges associated with growth.

Who should apply?

To be eligible for the program, participants must:

- Be a for-profit, privately-held company that is headquartered and operating in the region.
- Generate annual revenue of between \$1 million and \$50 million.
- Employ between 10 and 99 full-time-equivalent employees.
- Demonstrate growth in employment and/or revenue during two of the past five years.
- Provide products or services beyond the local area to regional, national or global markets.
- Be referred by a participating economic development or entrepreneur support organization.

What to expect

Fees: Costs are covered by regional or state organizations who have pooled funds to support this program.

Time: Accepted companies will spend 8 to 12 hours collaborating with their research team. The team, in turn, will be spending additional time behind the scenes working on your company's issues.

Potential issues: Identifying and prioritizing sales leads and business opportunities; refining your core strategies and business model; and using social media to connect with customers and create buzz about your products or services.

Logistics: You don't even have to leave your office. All communications are handled through the phone and a secure online portal where a workspace will be assigned to your company.

Hundreds of companies across the country have tested and implemented this program with outstanding results:



"I went into the Economic Gardening program with a lot of skepticism. My thinking was: If this is free, how good could it be? Yet it was a great experience. The research team answered a lot of questions that we had in the back of our heads — and validated a number of things we were doing right."

— Mel Limon, executive director of sales at Flame Engineering in LaCrosse, Kansas

"Economic Gardening is like a shot of adrenaline for a business... There are things you know you should be doing to grow, but there simply aren't enough hours in the day to get to them. The program creates structure and deadlines, and gives you resources to research some of those strategic issues."

— Mike Fox, CEO of Ingenuity IEQ,
a provider of indoor air quality solutions based in Midland, Mich.

"The process was faster than I thought, and I got more information than I expected, which has enabled me to zero in on the best opportunities. I could have spent days trolling websites looking for contacts and not getting anywhere. The team had answers for me in hours."

— Missy Rogers, president of Noble Plastics,
a custom injection-molding manufacturer in Lafayette, La.

How to get started

- 1 To ensure that you understand how the program works and if you would benefit, businesses must be referred by one of our participating organizations. To find a one in your area, call 269-445-4242.
- 2 Complete the online application. Among other things, you'll be asked to submit revenue and employment numbers for the past five years. You'll also be asked to list strategic business issues you need help with.
- 3 Someone from our organization will contact you within 24 hours.
- 4 Your application will be reviewed by the selection team.
- 5 If accepted into the program, we'll schedule an interview between you and the research team to start the process.

Value for your time

We understand that your to-do list already has reached a mind-boggling length. This program is built to accommodate an entrepreneur's time-crunched schedule. All research specialists in the network have been trained and certified by NCEG in a process that enables them to catch up to you and your company quickly. Plus, participation in the program is completely virtual. Communications are conducted via the phone and through NCEG's online software system.

In this online portal, you'll be assigned a secure workplace to interact with the research team. Any information that you submit here is confidential and will be seen only by the research specialists assigned to your company.

For more info, contact:

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The National Center for Economic Gardening is a partnership between the Edward Lowe Foundation and Chris Gibbons. NCEG delivers economic Gardening Services and maintains national standards in training and certification for both regional and statewide networks. The Edward Lowe Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports entrepreneurship through research, recognition and educational programs, which are delivered through entrepreneur support organizations (ESOs). For more info, visit www.edwardlowe.org