

Alexander County EDC *News Release*

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Alexander EDC sponsors website initiative for local businesses

The Alexander County Economic Development Corporation has announced a new program which is intended to help Alexander County businesses establish a presence on the Internet.

The Business and Industry Website Creation Grant is a competitive grant program which will provide funds for Alexander County based businesses that currently do not have websites. The grants will provide a minimum of a one-page website for businesses that are selected to participate in the program. The program will target businesses which have the best opportunity to export their product outside of Alexander County, are most likely to increase visitor traffic to the county, and are most likely to create or maintain local employment.

“In working with local industries and businesses, I was somewhat surprised to find that there are a significant number of local businesses that do not have websites,” said Economic Development Director David Icenhour. “According to a March report by Forrester Research, Inc., despite economic conditions, 2010 online sales in the U.S. will be about \$250 billion which is an increase from \$155 billion in 2009. If a business has a product that it can reasonably export outside of Alexander County, there’s no question that business should have a website. And, even if the business is focused only on the local area, a website may still be a very important tool.”

Grant applications will be accepted until 12 p.m. on Sept. 30. Guidelines about the program, including the application form, are available on the EDC website at www.AlexanderEDC.org. Applications may also be picked up at the EDC office located at 119 NC Hwy 16 North, Suite A or by calling the office at 632-1161. Grant applications will be judged on a variety of factors including type of service provided by the business, legal structure, location of business, financial need, and other factors.

“This grant program is not intended to be the total answer for local businesses in relation to doing business on the Internet,” said EDC Board Chairman Andrew Jackson. “However, we see this as an opportunity to help businesses get started on the Internet, and I hope that those selected will find value in advertising to a broader audience. The ultimate goal is to help create stable businesses that provide services, offer employment and build the tax base in Alexander County.”

The EDC Board, consisting of Andrew Jackson, Rick French, Bill Oram, Roy Calcagne, and Doug Caudle, has selected Presentations On The Web to provide design services for the grant program. Funding for this program is provided through private funds and funding from the Alexander County Board of Commissioners.

Top 10 reasons that your business needs a website

- 1. Always open.** Unlike your company's office that may be open from 8-5, Monday thru Friday, your company 's website is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- 2. It's Your Online Brochure / Catalog That Can Be Changed at Anytime.** A website is easier, cheaper and quicker to update than print material.
- 3. Reach New Markets with a Global Audience.** On the Internet, you aren't that local little business anymore. You have the potential to be seen by millions across the globe.
- 4. Improved Customer Service.** By providing answers to questions on your website, sales and information requests can be processed automatically and immediately.
- 5. Present a Professional Image.** A well-designed web site will instill confidence and make you look bigger than you actually are. Customers assume that you already have a website. Your primary competitors probably already have a presence on the Internet.
- 6. Low Overhead.** Selling in cyberspace is much cheaper and a good way to supplement your offline business.
- 7. Promote Your Services.** Lawyers, doctors, financial consultants, entertainers, realtors and all service oriented businesses should let customers know that they have a choice. Millions of users are referring to the web and are using company's websites to make major decisions.
- 8. Generate Valuable Leads.** You can gather information about your customers and potential customers by using forms and surveys. Rather than going out and getting leads, let them come to you.
- 9. Provides Instant Gratification.** People are busy and don't like to wait for information. Give them what they want, when they want it. Offer them free samples or trials to download.
- 10. Great Recruiting Tool.** Whether you are looking for talent or posting job opportunities with your company, your website is a great recruiting tool for building your business.

Source:Webeze.com (support@web-eze.com)