

Recipe for Business Success



The Pinellas County Business Development Center (BDC) is cooking up culinary business success with its latest partnership. Teamed with local business incubator **Your Pro Kitchen**, the BDC offers assistance to hopeful food industry entrepreneurs anxious to bring their tasty creations to market. "This is really a unique opportunity," says BDC Senior Manager Dr. Cynthia Johnson. "Combining the business assistance of the BDC with the industry knowledge of Your Pro Kitchen will better enable our clients to make the jump from product idea to fruition."

Business incubators offer entrepreneurs the space, support and resources necessary to test business concepts in the early stages of building a business. True to that definition, Your Pro Kitchen provides a professionally equipped, commercially licensed, multi-station kitchen facility for professional cooking and baking at an affordable price, as well as staff that can assist clients with their specific needs. Explains Cindy Herman, President of Your Pro Kitchen, "State and local laws require all food prepared for sale to the public to be prepared or produced at a commercially licensed kitchen, but the costs associated with building or renting such a space are often unattainably high for a start-up business. Here, clients can work on new products in an affordable environment and still meet food industry regulations." In fact, clients of the incubator have access to more than a commercial kitchen; they also benefit from the Your Pro Kitchen staff's

expertise in product development, inspections, and FDA requirements. “We enjoy a good reputation and good relationships with state and federal regulators,” adds Herman. “We can walk our clients through the maze of licensing and permitting regulations to ensure that nothing is overlooked.”

Back at the BDC, clients receive assistance in other areas. Dr. Johnson explains, “Over the years, we’ve received numerous requests from clients for a business incubator to fill the specific needs of food industry entrepreneurship. Your Pro Kitchen provides that, while the BDC helps partnership clients navigate the waters of entrepreneurship.” BDC staff members assist clients with technical assistance for financing expansion, such as transitioning to their own facility, and the nuts and bolts of business development strategies to help them get there. That includes business plans, marketing strategies, cash flow techniques and other business management skills.

Your Pro Kitchen is the only kitchen incubator in the state of Florida, and one of only three in the U.S. During the first two months of its partnership with the Pinellas County BDC, the incubator had already received several referrals from BDC staff and vice-versa. “I think we’ve created something truly special by partnering with the BDC,” says Herman. “Our clients will reap the benefits of our combined industry and business acumen; I can’t wait to see their ideas come to life!”

Learn more about Your Pro Kitchen at www.yourprokitchen.com.

Visit www.pced.org/entrepreneurs to find resources and contacts to make your own recipe for business success.

