

MEDIA CONTACT:  
Lisa Clark  
Ad 1 Partners, Inc.  
412 322 5535

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**RIVERSIDE CENTER FOR INNOVATION OPENS  
DIVERSITY BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER**

PITTSBURGH, Pa. — Riverside Center for Innovation announces the grand opening of the Diversity Business Resource Center offering strategic support for women- and minority-owned and disadvantaged businesses in the Greater Pittsburgh area.

The Resource Center’s mission is to strengthen economic opportunities and provide assistance that will enable women- and minority-owned and disadvantaged businesses to secure contracts leading to the profitability and growth of these businesses within the region. It is a joint venture between Riverside Center for Innovation (RCI), a regional leader in small business development, and the Minority/Women/Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (MWDBE) Governmental Committee, which has representatives from local, state and federal agencies.

“This project has 17 government agencies and a non-profit service provider coming together in a collaborative fashion to provide information and services to the minority-, women- and small business owners in our region. I don’t know of any other project in the country that has this level of participation and commitment,” says Ruth Byrd-Smith, Director of the Allegheny County Department of MWDBE.

Entrepreneurs can take advantage of business coaching and mentorship, training programs, and a supplier diversity network that will connect them with corporate, government and institutional buyers. For example, one component is a 12-week program designed to help new entrepreneurs develop business plans and raise capital. In addition, clients will have access to the experience and services of the 44 small businesses located at RCI’s North Side incubator.

During its first three years of operation, the Resource Center expects to create a network of 350 women and minority entrepreneurs; provide referrals for 300 start-up or small businesses; offer business training to 100 participants; and help at least 50 professionals gain local, state or federal certification.

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“With one physical location for comprehensive provision of services, RCI can ensure that minority and women-owned businesses receive significant and timely information about business opportunities through affiliated RCI channels, are effectively matched with government contracts, and gain direct access to financial resources and technical assistance,” says Chloe Vasquez, a member of the organizing committee and President of Sabio Springs, a small business located at RCI. “I wish I would have had a resource like this when I started my business.”

Helping Pittsburgh businesses succeed is nothing new to RCI. It hosted the Western Pennsylvania Business Information Center from 2000 to early 2005, when the U.S. Small Business Administration withdrew financial support to a slew of centers across the nation. “Our goal is to provide support for new and existing business ventures and create new jobs and new economic growth in our region,” says Emily Buka, Executive Director of RCI.

The MWDBE Governmental Committee participants include: Allegheny County Airport Authority, Allegheny County Housing Authority, Allegheny County Dept. of MWDBE, Allegheny County Dept. of Public Works, Allegheny County Sanitary Authority, City of Pittsburgh Equal Opportunity Review Commission, Community College of Allegheny County, Government Agency Coordination Office, Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh, PA Bureau of Minority and Women Business Opportunities, Pittsburgh Parking Authority, Pittsburgh Public Schools, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, 3 Rivers Wet Weather, University of Pittsburgh, U.S. Small Business Administration, and Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh.

The Diversity Business Resource Center is located at Riverside Center for Innovation, 700 River Avenue, North Side. For more information about the Resource Center or RCI, call 412-322-3523 or visit [riversidecenterforinnovation.com](http://riversidecenterforinnovation.com).

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