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# Find a job with Journal-News: Create your career and start a business

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By Chelsey Levingston

Staff Writer

Starting a business isn't for everyone, but it's an option for entrepreneurs willing to take on some risk to create their own job, said Mark Lankford, associate director and business advisor for the Butler County Small Business Development Center.

Here are some services for area residents considering starting a business:

### FREE COUNSELING

The Butler County Small Business Development Center, one of approximately 27 centers across the state, offers free confidential counseling to budding entrepreneurs. The center also offers educational training, workshops and seminars throughout the year, as well as help preparing a business plan.

The Butler County center has two offices to meet clients: one at the Hamilton Mill building at 20 High St. in Hamilton; and the other located at the Middletown City Building at One Donham Plaza.

During the most recent government year that ended Sept. 30, the Butler County center ranked second in the state for capital infusion of \$16.8 million invested in new local businesses, said David Riggs, the development center's director. Butler County also ranked third for most new business starts. Last year, the Butler County center's services helped start 33 new companies, according to Riggs.

One reason why Riggs thinks the center saw new business starts rise is better quality clients and ideas. He said all 33 starts are still in business. "The relationships we've formed have really helped," he added.

For more information, call 513-737-6543 in Hamilton, call 513-727-3686 in Middletown or go online to [www.butlercountysbdc.com](http://www.butlercountysbdc.com).

### QUALIFY FOR MICRO LOAN

A Butler County program is now enrolling students for its next 10-week course about starting and operating a small business, Lankford said.

Three area agencies — Supports to Encourage Low-Income Families, Butler County Small Business Development Center and Neighborhood Housing Services of Hamilton — collaborate to offer the Butler County Microenterprise and Microloan Program three times a year.

Students must meet income requirements to qualify for the free course and be a county resident. Classes are held 6 to 9 p.m. Wednesday nights and the next session begins in January, according to Lankford.

Graduates complete a business plan and are eligible to apply for a maximum \$5,000 loan.

"Interest has been increasing in it, so if they're interested, they shouldn't wait," Lankford said.

For more information about the program, contact the Butler County Small Business Development Center, call Jerry Brown at SELF at 513-820-5023, or go online to [www.selfhelps.org/microenterprise](http://www.selfhelps.org/microenterprise).

### OTHER OPTIONS

Other programs in the area that could help entrepreneurs get started include the new bachelor's degree in Commerce offered at Miami University's Regionals campuses in Hamilton, Middletown and West Chester Twp., according to the Regionals' website [www.regionals.miamioh.edu/](http://www.regionals.miamioh.edu/).

Also, small business owners that need to vet their ideas with experienced business executives or get expert help developing business plans have another local organization to turn to. For free. The Greater Cincinnati Chapter of Service Corps of Retired Executives, better known as SCORE, has about 100 volunteer mentors to help existing small businesses and startups grow, Executive Director Betsy Newman previously told Journal-News. Mentors are mainly retired executives.

The Greater Cincinnati SCORE chapter has a satellite office in Butler County at West Chester-Liberty Chamber Alliance, which is located at 8922 Beckett Road, West Chester Twp. For more information, call 513-684-2812 or visit [www.scoreworks.org](http://www.scoreworks.org).

## ABOUT THIS COLUMN

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