



For Immediate Release

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eBizITPA Assessing Potential for eCommerce in Four Erie County Communities

ERIE, PA (July 16, 2007) --- The Center for eBusiness and Advanced IT (eBizITPA) is conducting a pilot project on the potential for downtown businesses in smaller Pennsylvania communities to develop eCommerce services for customers.

An eBizITPA team is currently visiting with business owners in four Northwest Pa. communities – Corry, Edinboro, Union City and Waterford – to determine how much business owners know about eCommerce and if they would be interested in developing online sales capabilities.

“eCommerce is a rapidly growing sector of the U.S. marketplace,” said Jodi Herman, eBizITPA’s research analyst coordinating the project. “By learning more about eCommerce and understanding the potential for online sales, we believe that many small businesses can augment their bricks-and-mortar operations with online sales and services. Having an eCommerce presence offers the opportunity for increased visibility and the great potential to increase sales.”

“For example,” Herman said, “a local antique shop can extend hours to be open and available online 24/7; a restaurant can accept online reservations. Having your business online allows you to significantly extend your geographic reach. Someone who grew up within one of these Northwest Pa. communities, but has since left the area, could still shop in his/her favorite downtown store – thanks to the convenience of the Internet.”

eBizITPA has developed this pilot project in order to determine next steps in assisting interested business owners with getting their business online. Since its inception in 2002, eBizITPA has provided hundreds of Pa. professionals with training in eCommerce, Internet marketing and more. In the past four years, eBizITPA has assisted 238 Western and Central Pa. companies through the IT Kickstart mini-grant program.

The eBizITPA research team will be scheduling interviews with local business owners in the four communities for the remainder of the summer. Any business owner who is not directly contacted, but is interested in participating in the research initiative is encouraged to contact Herman at eBizITPA’s office: (814) 898-6500.

The Center for eBusiness and Advanced Information Technology (eBizITPA), headquartered in Erie, Pa., is a statewide Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority Initiative, designed to help Pennsylvania enterprises understand and use information technology and e-business tools.

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