

**News Release**  
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## **Rural Strong Event in Traverse City to Focus on Expanding Businesses and the Local Economy**

TRAVERSE CITY, MI –Small business owners, aspiring entrepreneurs, and economic development organizations will learn how to start, grow, or expand their businesses and local economy at a Rural Strong event June 7 in Traverse City. The event is being hosted by the U.S. Small Business Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Northwest Michigan Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The event will feature roundtable discussions that will educate attendees about federally-backed financing, ways to access funding, and accessing small business advising opportunities available to them at no or low cost. The event will run from 9:30 am to 10:30 am at the Northwest Michigan Works! Conference Center, 1209 S. Garfield Avenue.

Participants at the Rural Strong event will include Michigan SBA District Director Constance Logan; SBA's National Rural Advocate, Joe Knilans; and USDA Rural Development State Director for Michigan, Jason Allen. They will look at ways to support economic and small business development, discuss the challenges and needs unique to the local community, and identify potential partnerships. Understanding the unique circumstances of small businesses that serve rural communities and unique business structures and regional diversity of those businesses is the foundation of the Rural Strong initiative.

“Our Rural Strong initiative provides entrepreneurs in small towns and rural communities with direct access to resources available to help them elevate their business’ and community’s economic strength,” said SBA Great Lakes Regional Administrator, Rob Scott. “Through our partnership with the USDA, we are focused on assisting small businesses to increase their access to capital, expand investment options and improve opportunities to export their products and services.”

SBA (including SBDC) and USDA field representatives, as well as successful small business owners, will be on site to provide one-on-one guidance. Registration is available online at [nwm.org/ruralstrong](http://nwm.org/ruralstrong).

More than 46 million Americans live in counties designated as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau, but small businesses in rural areas may lack access to capital and other resources available in more urban areas. SBA's Rural Strong initiative aims to level the playing field and elevate small businesses by offering loan incentives and training entrepreneurs to access government contracting and export opportunities.

(MORE)

Small businesses are engines of the economy and create two out of three net new jobs in the private sector; supporting them will help rural areas strengthen and diversify their local economies and provide new opportunities for their workforce. The SBA and USDA partnership is built on the priorities of the President's Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity.

### **About the U.S. Small Business Administration**

The U.S. Small Business Administration makes the American dream of business ownership a reality. As the only go-to resource and voice for small businesses backed by the strength of the federal government, the SBA empowers entrepreneurs and small business owners with the resources and support they need to start, grow or expand their businesses, or recover from a declared disaster. It delivers services through an extensive network of SBA field offices and partnerships with public and private organizations. To learn more, visit [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

### **About Michigan SBDC**

The Michigan Small Business Development Center (MI-SBDC) provides expert assistance at no cost to entrepreneurs looking to start or grow a business. The Northwest Michigan Regional Center is hosted by Networks Northwest and serves the ten county region including: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford counties. For more information, go to: [sbdcnorthwest.org](http://sbdcnorthwest.org).

The Michigan SBDC State Lead Center is located at Grand Valley State University, Seidman College of Business, in Grand Rapids. Michigan small business owners may access the Michigan SBDC services by contacting 616-331-7480 or [SDBCMichigan.org](http://SDBCMichigan.org).

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by e-mailing Dan Boss at [dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org](mailto:dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org) and stating preferences for resolution (300 dpi?), file format (.tif? .jpg?) and file size (1MB or less?). Or, phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at: [networksnorthwest.org/media](http://networksnorthwest.org/media)

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10 county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works, Small Business Development Center, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our website, [networksnorthwest.org](http://networksnorthwest.org)

Networks Northwest's member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.