

Suffolk County looks to 'Boost' high-tech businesses

Suffolk IDA would offer incentives to startups

by Arlene Gross

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Glenn Nortman, vice president of strategic accounts, at Work Market in the company's yet-to-be-furnished office on Wall Street in Huntington. Photo by Arlene Gross
The county's Industrial Development Agency is offering a program called Boost with an assortment of incentives to attract and keep high-tech companies in Suffolk.

Traditionally, the IDA catered to companies whose projects exceeded \$1 million in annual costs, IDA Executive Director Anthony Manetta said. But as of its July 26 board meeting, the IDA is offering smaller companies property and sales tax reductions to make it easier for them to do business in Suffolk. The new program eliminates barriers for local growth companies that may have started in someone's home or in an incubator space but want to grow, take up larger space or purchase equipment.

Through Boost, landlords of high-tech companies that are receiving inducements to grow in Suffolk would receive property tax reductions aimed at incentivizing them to offer their tenants five-year as opposed to the standard 10-year lease terms, Manetta said. Other incentives to companies include a 75 percent reduction in the Suffolk County IDA application fee, from \$2,000 to \$500, and lowering their administrative fees by 56 percent.

As the new director of the IDA, Manetta said he wants the organization to foster and nurture growth companies in Suffolk County. "And this was a good way to do it."

Aside from recruiting new companies to the county, Boost also aims to incentivize companies to grow and stay here rather than move to another location that might seem more affordable, Manetta said.

"It's not just about the attraction of companies to come in. That's an important part but equally important is the retention of our talented companies and employees to stay here in Suffolk County."

While any manufacturing company is eligible to be part of IDA, the Boost program focuses on information technology, bio- and life sciences, pharmacology, green technology and energy companies.

As the first Boost program applicant, Work Market, an \$11 million venture capital-backed software company based in Manhattan, recently opened a sales office in Huntington that plans to eventually employ 25 people and is on track to receive more than \$51,000 in incentives during a five-year period.

Work Market Chief Executive Officer Jeff Leventhal said the new program shows IDA's willingness to open its arms to startups. "Their aggressiveness in wanting Work Market to open in Huntington, along with the benefits they are providing, were significant factors in our decision to come to Suffolk County," Leventhal said.

Many of the employees stationed in the new Work Market office happen to live close by and would rather not commute to the city, said Glenn Nortman, vice president of strategic accounts for the company.

County Executive Steve Bellone said the Boost program would give smaller innovation companies like Work Market a launching pad to grow and develop in Suffolk.

"Landing Work Market through the new Boost program demonstrates the Suffolk IDA is aggressive about creating a pro-growth environment and securing jobs," Bellone stated.

Though Boost is just in its infancy, Manetta is optimistic that companies will take advantage of the program and help the Long Island economy grow.

"We want to have a positive outlook that companies that are out there will learn about the program and take advantage of the incentives, which will only be of a positive impact to our local economy in terms of retaining our companies here and growing local jobs. When we're supporting projects like this, it has a tremendously positive impact on the economy by creating jobs, creating local spending in our business district and fostering the housing market."

Anil Dhundale, executive director of the Long Island High Technology Incubator, a nonprofit business incubator that is based at and affiliated with Stony Brook University, welcomed the new incentive program, especially as its companies grow from their initial locales to larger spaces in the county.

"We plan to work closely with the Suffolk IDA and our LIHTI tenants to create an ongoing awareness of the program," Dhundale said.

<http://www.northshoreoflongisland.com/Articles-News-i-2012-08-30-93566.112114-sub-Suffolk-County-looks-to-Boost-hightech-businesses.html#print>