

Philadelphia development partnership launches technology lab benefiting neighborhood microenterprises

Philadelphia Development Partnership (PDP), a non-profit organization and the region's leading provider of capital and business development services to low and moderate income microentrepreneurs, is pleased to announce the opening of a brand-new, state-of-the-art technology lab at its Center City office.

PDP serves more than 350 clients per year—among them child care providers, specialty gift merchants, hair and nail stylists, bakers, caterers, contractors and professional service providers - who are starting or expanding a micro-enterprise in the inner city neighborhoods of Philadelphia. A microenterprise is a business with five or fewer employees that has initial capital needs of less than \$35,000.

In 2003, PDP was one of nine recipients nationwide selected to receive a technology grant from HP through its Microenterprise Development Program, an initiative aimed at assisting non-profit microenterprise development

agencies to advance economic growth in low-income communities. HP awarded PDP nearly \$250,000 in equipment, services and technical assistance to establish the lab.

Designed specifically for microentrepreneurs, PDP's new lab is equipped with laptop computers fitted with business productivity software and high-speed wireless Internet service, as well as high-speed laser printers. The lab provides microentrepreneurs with access to the tools they need to design marketing collateral, create business cards and correspondence, develop business plans and conduct market research. In addition, several new technology workshops have been developed to teach microentrepreneurs to use technology (computers, software applications and the Internet) to expand their markets and increase their efficiency and profitability.

"The new lab is a critical first step in helping low-income entrepreneurs bridge



Pictured above from L to R Leslie H. Benoit, Philadelphia Development Partnership; H. Camilla Nelson, Hewlett Packard; and Jim Turner from the Chester Micro Enterprise Center at the PDP office in Center City.

the 'digital divide'," says Leslie Benoit, PDP's executive director.

"With this program and our partnership with microenterprise development organizations like PDP, HP hopes to help close the gap between technology empowered and technology excluded communities," says Camilla Nelson, program manager for Philanthropy and Education at

Philadelphia Development Partnership
growing businesses... growing

and the conference, with an expected attendance of 700 people, is one of the most widely acclaimed gatherings of microentre-

prise thought-leaders in the United States. PDP is an affiliate of the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition.

HP

An event was held on May 24 to officially launch the technology lab. The event coincided with the Association for Enterprise Opportunity's (AEO's) 14th Annual Conference, that was held at the Loews Hotel in Philadelphia. AEO is the only national association of organizations committed to microenterprise development