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USF Poly Incubators Getting Closer

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LAKELAND | Attention entrepreneurs and innovators: The University of South Florida Polytechnic wants to make your business plan a reality.

With two local business "incubators" just weeks away from opening their doors, USF Poly is ramping up its search for applicants who wish to pair with the university for research and development partnerships.

USF wants to hear from both established and fledgling companies - as well as would-be entrepreneurs - in technology- or science-based industries. Bold thinkers are welcome to apply.

"Round pegs in square holes...they're the type of people who will be the target," said Didier Rousseliere, USF Poly's director of business incubation and global partnerships.

Speaking at the university's Information Technology Colloquium on Wednesday, Rousseliere said USF's two incubators in Lakeland and Winter Haven are projected to open at the end of the month.

The Lakeland site, called Blue Sky West, is geared toward startup companies and new entrepreneurs who want to bring a business plan to fruition. In Winter Haven, Blue Sky East will function as an "accelerator" for more established firms.

Both will allow participating companies to rent space to use as satellite offices and work directly with USF researchers and interns. Targeted industries include information technology, healthcare, telecommunications, logistics, flavors and



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At USF Polytechnic, Didier Rousseliere, director of Business Incubation and Global Partnerships at USF, gave a talk on the business incubators being developed by USF for Polk County.

essences, and business services.

Rousseliere said USF has received interest from a number of firms and plans to assemble a committee to review applications. At full capacity, both incubators would host approximately 16 firms total. USF plans to be working with about half that amount within a year.

Among the interested parties is Franwell, a Lakeland-based developer of radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology. RFID is primarily used as a tracking and inventory tool in the supply chain industry, and Franwell officials say they want to partner with USF for assistance in developing new products.

USF Poly is "positioned to do that, and we're going to help them in any way we can," said Franwell President Jeff Wells recently.

Applications for the business incubation program are available at poly.usf.edu/x4489.xml.

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