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**New York State, the Federal Bank of New York, and Mohawk Valley EDGE
Host a Forum to Help Agriculture, Food, and Beverage Businesses Grow**

*Small Business Owners Meet Financial Industry Representatives to
Learn About Accessing Capital*

Empire State Development (ESD) today announced that Access to Capital, a free conference and resource expo to help people in the food-and-beverage and agriculture industries access capital and grow their businesses, was a resounding success, with numerous Mohawk Valley business owners learning about how to expand their companies.

Today's event at Herkimer County Community College was the first of three scheduled to take place statewide in coming months. Dozens of representatives from the financial industry and federal, state, and local government agencies gathered at the Robert McLaughlin College Center, to give small business owners an inside perspective on alternative funding sources, what lenders look for in potential borrowers, and how to access potential international markets. It was a collaboration between ESD, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, in partnership with Mohawk Valley EDGE.

"Access to Capital presents a great opportunity for New York's small business owners to learn how, and where, to grow their companies," said Empire State Development President, CEO and Commissioner Howard Zemsky. "This state is bursting with business talent, but even the best and the brightest among us sometimes need help achieving our full potential, which is what Access to Capital is all about."

"The food and beverage industry has seen incredible growth under the Governor's leadership, and it's important we continue to support these agri-businesses and help them succeed," said State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball. "We are pleased to co-host the Access to Capital forum, which is a great way to provide small business owners guidance not only on the financial resources that are available from a variety of organizations but also help them better connect the dots to technical assistance as well."

“Under the leadership of Governor Cuomo, ESD has worked harder than ever to find ways to support and grow the small businesses that drive the Mohawk Valley economy,” said Kenneth Tompkins, ESD Regional Director for the Mohawk Valley. “Our day-to-day efforts coupled with creative initiatives like Access to Capital, which is connecting entrepreneurs and small businesses with investors, are generating economic opportunities for businesses that benefit our communities and region as a whole. On behalf of the Mohawk Valley economic development team, I would like to thank Herkimer County Community College for hosting this event.”

“Finding access to useful capital is a challenge for our region’s food and beverage industry” said Steven J. DiMeo, President of Mohawk Valley EDGE. “Events like this help our business community make connections that would otherwise go unnoticed and find practical ways to fill financing gaps to help their projects succeed. Food and beverage manufacturing is a growing niche in the Mohawk Valley and EDGE is committed to supporting its advancement.”

Access to Capital was first launched in 2014, after officials at Empire State Development began to learn that owners of small food, beverage, and agriculture businesses often found it difficult finding the right industry lenders and international markets. Realizing that companies need capital and markets to grow, ESD teamed up with the state Department of Agriculture and Markets and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to help business owners connect with specialized banks, funds, investors, and government programs for their industries.

The first Access to Capital event, held in Albany last year, was such a success that it was expanded to three events across the state this year. The next one will be June 24, in Long Island, and the third will be July 28, in the Finger Lakes region.

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