

Innovate Michigan! Summit Hosts Business, Academic, and Community Leaders on MSU Campus

Conference brings together economic experts and professionals working on the front lines of economic development at local and regional levels throughout Michigan

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For Immediate Release

EAST LANSING, Mich. – The popular and dynamic Innovate Michigan! Summit returns for a fifth year on Wednesday, September 7 at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center on the East Lansing campus of Michigan State University, 8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Economic developers, entrepreneurs, business and community leaders, investors, scholars, students, and local and state government officials are invited to attend. The agenda is designed to share, learn, and create unique and innovative approaches aimed at furthering economic growth in Michigan.

The annual event continues the work supported by the U.S. Department of Commerce with the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) and the MSU EDA University Center for Regional Economic Innovation (REI). Funded by a five-year, \$915,000 grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration in 2011, REI is growing a statewide virtual network to help generate new models, policies, and practices that will improve the state's economic future.

REI's 2016 Innovate Michigan! Summit represents the culmination of almost 100 projects and nearly \$60,000,000 dollars in spurred investment. This event will be a knowledge sharing celebration highlighting five years of collective hard work and positive impacts on Michigan.

“Innovation in economic development is needed now more than ever. The work of REI and its partners is critical to our continued economic well-being,” said Rex LaMore, CCED director. LaMore is responsible for bringing the grant to MSU, and overseeing the outcomes during its five-year implementation.

“MSU's EDA University Center for Regional Economic Development is unique in that it offers a crowd-sourced method to creating, identifying and sharing innovative approaches to economic development. The Summit provides an opportunity to explore those innovative possibilities,” said Jennifer Bruen, CCED Project Coordinator.

Featured speakers include:

Joel Rash, Director, Red Ink Flint

10:30-11:10 a.m.

Kellogg Center Big Ten A

Rash will explain his Co-Implementation project that helps emerging entrepreneurs in Flint get their business off the ground. This grassroots community initiative connected the entrepreneurs with experienced mentors and set up “pop-up shop” opportunities to get started without the typical risks and barriers of opening a small business.

Samantha Farr, Founder and Instructor, Women Who Weld

11:25am-12:05 p.m.

Kellogg Center Room 103A

In her second round of funding, Farr refined her free instructional welding program for women and more closely analyzed its effectiveness. Her program has become a springboard to fulfilling careers for the participants, and has produced a direct economic benefit to the Detroit community. In her presentation, Farr will give advice to those interested in developing similar skilled-trades training programs in other communities.

Johnathan M. Holifield, Scale-Up Partners

Keynote Address

12:45-1:30 p.m.

Kellogg Center Big Ten C

A jack of many trades, Holifield takes his experiences as a former NFL athlete, civil rights advocate, and innovation economy leader to shine a light on economic inclusion. Presenting a compelling model for new economic narratives and community systems, along with an action framework for leaders in business, government, technology, education, philanthropy and the community, Holifield’s presentation is essential for anyone concerned about shared prosperity and the economic future of the United States.

Registration and information is available at REI’s website: <http://www.reicenter.org/>.

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Testimonials from last year’s event:

"The 2015 Innovate Michigan! Summit was a learning experience that introduced me to economic development efforts in other parts of the state that I didn't know about. I learned of a leading best practice workforce development effort in my own community and now I can't stop talking about it with other employers!" – Kara Wood, Economic Development Director, Michigan Economic Developers Association

"I attended the first REI Summit in 2012 and haven't missed one yet. While I look forward to seeing what's new, it's the variety of attendees and the range of speakers that keep me coming back. The speakers have covered everything from historic preservation in Cuba to triple bottom line businesses in Grand Rapids. Unlike many summits and conferences that can last for days, this one is only one day out of your life...and always a day well-spent."

—Dave Bee, Director, West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

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The mission of the Michigan State University Center for Community and Economic Development is to advance MSU's land-grant mission by creating, disseminating and applying knowledge to improve the quality of life in distressed communities.

Michigan State University has been advancing knowledge and transforming lives through innovative teaching, research and outreach for more than 150 years. MSU is known internationally as a major public university with global reach and extraordinary impact. Its 17 degree-granting colleges attract scholars worldwide who are interested in combining education with practical problem solving.

***NOTE: Rex LaMore will be available for comment and interviews at alternative times if media contacts are unable to attend the event.