

Arkansas Business Navigator Podcast Episode 11: AR SBA Hires New Lender Relation Specialist, PTAC is APEX Accelerator, New Latino ABN Spoke



Hello and welcome to the Arkansas Business Navigator Podcast, the show that reviews U.S. Small Business Administration and Arkansas Business Navigator resources available to support small business owners and entrepreneurs in the Natural state. I'm your host Brandon Mathews, and in today's episode is all about new things. The Arkansas SBA District Office hired a new employee. Our friends at Arkansas PTAC have a new name. Spoiler alert, it's the 'APEX' of all names. And lastly, the Arkansas Business Navigator program has brought on a new Spoke seeking to bridge the gap between English- and Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs. Let's dive in.

Intro Music

The SBA Arkansas District Office was looking to fill a vacancy of a long-term employee's departure for several months until now. On March 6, Christian Pennington joined the Arkansas office as the new Lender Relations Specialist. Christian served for six years in the same position while also serving as the Public Information Office at the SBA Boise District Office (that's the capital of Idaho for those of you who didn't do so well in U.S. Geography). He served a brief stint analyzing disaster loans for Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, and he brings a tremendous amount of experience from Louisiana Economic Development Corporation as their Loan and Investment Officer. His resume is padded with all kinds of certifications that are going to help Christian in his primary role serving new and existing banks in Arkansas that wish to participate in SBA lending. Throughout the year, he'll be traveling and conducting training and educating lenders about the programs that exist to help you start and grow your small business. Chances are, if your lender has a question about your SBA loan application, Christian is going to have the answer. Welcome to Arkansas, Christian!

Transition Music

In December of 2022, I interviewed Melanie Berman, Director of Arkansas Procurement and Technical Assistance Center (AR PTAC), and she shared that their organization would be undergoing a name change in 2023. Well, it's official. Arkansas PTAC is now Arkansas APEX Accelerator. Sorry guys, I couldn't help myself. Nothing changes for anyone in Arkansas wanting to get into government contracting except for a few new urls and email links. I'll include those in the show notes. Regarding the name change, Melanie mentioned in a recent press release

that, APEX means the highest point of something, and she hopes to achieve that in the level of service her program provides to Arkansas businesses. The name change also coincides with the programs moving from the Defense Logistics Agency to the Department of Defense Office of Small Business Programs under a new Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Defense and the Small Business Administration. The takeaway: New name. New Look. Same great service.

Transition Music

The last bit of news is about our newest Spoke to the Arkansas Business Navigator Program, Conexión de Negocios Latinos. In English, that's the Latino Business Connection. Now, I'm going to save everyone the trouble of listening to my bad pronunciation of the name and refer to it as CNL. CNL is a not-for-profit that focuses on supporting Latino business in Arkansas. Through this partnership with Arkansas Business Navigator, CNL will provide specialized support and resources to Latino entrepreneurs across the state. According to Irma Chavez, Founder and CEO of CNL, Latino-owned small businesses are one of the fastest growing segments of Arkansas economy, but they often face significant challenges, including limited access to capital, language barriers, and cultural differences. Irma is excited to be a part of the program is keen on serving Latino-based businesses through bilingual business advisors who can provide meaningful assistance and support in Spanish and English; specialized training and workshops focused on challenges unique to Latino entrepreneurs, assistance accessing capital funding, and connecting a network of Latino business owners and entrepreneurs across the state. Bienvenido, Conexión de Negocios Latinos!

Transition Music

It's time to review some events around the state. Arkansas Business Navigator's Hub, UA Little Rock ASBTDC Lead Center, will be hosting a Food & Beverage Startup Series beginning April 11 and ending on May 1. The first three sessions will be virtual from 12-1pm with the final session being in-person at the ROCK IT! LAB in Little Rock. If you want to learn about R&D, licensing, pricing, financing, or getting ready and hearing from other resource providers from around the state, get registered now with the link in the description. This series is free, but you have to register.

Our friends at ASBTDC are hosting a workshop online and in-person called "Creating a Brand Guide for your Business: The Basics. This will be April 11 from 6-7:30pm. Contact Dmitri Scott at dscott@ualr.edu for more information.

This last one isn't an event, but where to find them. The SBA District office is constantly updating their list of webinars, workshops, and trainings happening across Arkansas. Check out the show notes for a link to their event page to see what's happening near you.

Ending Music

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