



## ANN ARBOR/YPSILANTI SMARTZONE

LDFA

### MARKETING PLAN

June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Ann Arbor SPARK (SPARK) is engaged in a variety of ongoing marketing and public relations efforts in support of the SPARK Business Accelerator (BA). These activities promote the creation and growth of innovation-based companies within the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti SmartZone. **The marketing plan is designed with the purpose of accelerating start-up business formation within the geographic boundary of the City of Ann Arbor.** Our marketing supports:

- Business Accelerator Services
- Biannual Entrepreneur Boot Camp Program
- Business formation training
- Educational and networking events
- Start-up business resources, including consulting and business incubators

To fully leverage its marketing and PR efforts, SPARK has teamed up with local, regional and state-level partners to maximize its resources. It uses numerous outlets for communication, balancing client-related messaging, regional promotion and overall Business Accelerator awareness. This complexity demands that some marketing and PR activities be conducted on an integrated basis, to assure consistency and impact of the brand and messaging over time.

This plan has an overall Communication Objective for the SmartZone's intended audiences; it pursues the objective via several distinct Communication Strategies; it incorporates electronic and traditional media Tactics to achieve the goals; and it targets specific Outcomes of importance to the mission of the SmartZone. Each of these is presented below, followed by implications for the budget.



## Communication Objectives

Increase awareness of the SPARK Business Accelerator as the local source for start-up/entrepreneurial education, funding assistance, business plan development, incubation and networking. Our communication outreach will focus on talent, sources of investment and customers.

Emphasis will be placed on the following key industries and audiences:

### *Key Industries:*

- Life Sciences (medical devices, biotechnology, contract research organizations, medical IT)
- Information Technology (including applications development, software-as-a-service, internet-related businesses)
- Advanced manufacturing
- Cleantech (including alternative energy, transportation, energy storage and efficiency)
- Photonics (including optics, imaging, lasers, communications and related automation)
- Advanced Materials (including nano particles, and coatings)
- Homeland Security & Defense (including tracking and surveillance, and advanced data collection)

### *Key Audiences:*

- Entrepreneurs
- SPARK regional incubator network tenants
- Job seekers and employers
- Tech-enabled innovations
- Professional investors
- Angel investors
- University technology
- User groups
- University entrepreneurs
- Partner organizations
- Trade groups
- Micro-clusters
- Service providers (e.g., law firms, banks)
- Media outlets



## Communication Strategies

### Purpose of the Marketing and Public Relations Programs:


- Establish and reinforce Ann Arbor as a desirable and supportive area for launching and growing innovative companies, related to the goal of assisting start-up businesses within the City of Ann Arbor.
- Promote Business Accelerator training and educational programs within the entrepreneurial community
- Lead the conversation related to promoting Ann Arbor as a start-up business destination and an entrepreneurial “hot spot,” related to the goal of assisting start-up businesses within the City of Ann Arbor
- Promote Business Accelerator resources and services
- Promote the business incubator space and clients
- Support the SPARK entrepreneur education and talent enhancement initiatives including:
  - Starting Your Own Business seminars
  - Monthly Series Events (BioArbor, Marketing Roundtable, Michigan Energy Forum, Business Law and Order, Selling Smart Workshop)
  - Hot Shots
  - Weekly event newsletter
  - Weekly talent newsletter
  - Monthly Employer newsletter
  - Talent Portal
  - Retraining – Shifting Code

## Marketing and PR plan

### Marketing Plan

#### Website

- Ongoing design, content creation, and navigation updates
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- SPARK portfolio company database design, content creation, and management
- Social media integration utilizing tools such as: Ann Arbor SPARK’s blog, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, and Vimeo.
- Integration with partner sites (AACVB, Pure Michigan, Michigan Advantage, A2 Chamber, AnnArbor.com)
- Update design and navigation of the Talent Portal



## Event Sponsorships

- SPARK will sponsor start-up associated seminars, events, and programs that take place within the City of Ann Arbor.
- Support educational and networking events in partnership or as a sponsor with other entrepreneurial support organizations (e.g., A2Geeks, Zell Lurie Institute, & user groups.)

## Adwords Campaign

- Will target Business Accelerator services including incubator space, Entrepreneur Boot Camp, entrepreneur education & networking events, expert consulting services for start-ups, and talent recruitment.

## SPARK Events

- Online events calendar for both the community & Ann Arbor SPARK hosted events.
- Weekly Events Newsletter
- Promotional support of entrepreneurial-focused events with varying outcomes and purposes; networking, training, education, and talent placement.
- Promotion of Ann Arbor area entrepreneurial events & programs
- Offer and promote live webcasts of Ann Arbor SPARK series events to allow for remote participation and interaction.
- Offer an online archived video library of Ann Arbor SPARK series events for sharing and viewing post-event.


## Public Relations Plan

### Media Relations

- Consistently reach out to local, national business and industry-specific trade media.
- Share positive stories about the Ann Arbor area and the successful start-up companies programs

### Pure Michigan-Why Ann Arbor Campaign

- Leverage the \$1 million Ann Arbor Pure Michigan Business Attraction campaign to promote local start-up companies on a national level.
- Promote Ann Arbor nationally as a destination for start-up companies to grow and thrive, with an emphasis on “quality of place”.




## Incoming Mission Trips/Familiarization Tours

- Support Business Accelerator FAM tours for key investors and start-up executive talent in the City of Ann Arbor.

## Anticipated Outcomes

- Maintain the current pipeline level of BA clients
- Maintain the pipeline of Boot Camp applicants at 30 per year
- Garner 2-3 digital & online media mentions per month for Entrepreneurial Services clients & success stories.
- Maintain SPARK Central incubator at 80% occupancy.
- Highly visible and integrated digital marketing and social media presence, promoting SPARK's start-up services and successes
- CEO Podcasts: Conversations on Economic Opportunity. Platform for SPARK's leadership to create dialogue on economic development in the area, as well as promote the area's thriving start-up culture.
- Streamlined newsletters (Events, Talent) being distributed at a frequency that is appropriate for readers.
- User-friendly SPARK website landing page with easy navigation to entrepreneurial & talent services for Ann Arbor companies.
- Staff well-versed in SPARK entrepreneurial services elevator pitch, and able to consistently deliver our brand to the Ann Arbor community.
- Ann Arbor start-up companies receiving exposure in both local and national media.



## Budget

Budget for the LDFA contract '12-'13 is \$71,633 for marketing and PR, approximately 30% of SPARK's total marketing and PR budget. The events and sponsorship budget is \$30,000.