



Formerly Maine Centers for Women, Work, and Community

Statement of Support

New Ventures Maine (NVME) is pleased to forward Ms. Matthews business plan for The Lymphatic Retreat Center for consideration as a semi-finalist in the 2016 InnovateHER competition. The four member panel of judges reviewed six business plans individually using a weighted numeric score for the three contest criteria (a seventh application was received after the deadline). In addition, the judges considered the quality and the completeness of the plan and the accompanying cover letter in determining that The Lymphatic Retreat Center best satisfied the Challenge criteria and presented the greatest potential for success.

Among the factors that contributed to their decision:

- The cover letter and business plan clearly and directly addressed the three contest criteria.
 - A product or service that has a measurable impact on the lives of women and families

The Lymphatic Retreat Center's mission is to "offer educational opportunities to women seeking to understand and explore her own lymphatic health." The goal of the center is to help all women "better understand their bodies, as well as empower themselves to make more knowledgeable decisions thus saving time and money".

Market research indicated that more women make use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) than do men. The proposal to offer continuing education credits to nurses and massage therapists also target a largely female market.

- The potential for commercialization

The Center builds on a successful existing business and incorporates three elements – massage, aromatherapy, lymphatic evaluation and education, through two-day retreats to be offered throughout the year. Offering educational retreats to massage therapists and nurses will help facilitate a conversation among consumers and health care providers alike of the role of CAM, and the lymphatic system in particular, in maintaining wellness thus adding to the market potential.

- Fills a need in the marketplace

Health care costs are increasing. Physician availability is decreasing. Billions are being spent on complementary and alternative products and services. Health and fitness retreats are gaining in popularity, particularly in complementary health. The existence of at least a few similar retreat centers around the country was seen as a good market validation, and certainly in Maine it will provide an innovative health service.

Make it happen

In addition to meeting the competition criteria, the judges assessed her potential for success based on the following evidence:

- Ms. Matthews indicated a willingness and interest in getting specific feedback on her idea and in fact sought out technical assistance in the process of submitting her plan. Her openness to continued input and improvement of her business was seen as a strong plus by the judges.
- Ms. Matthews was the first to contact NVME about the contest; her persistence, enthusiasm and commitment came through and duly impressed the judges.

The experience and expertise of the judges were critical to the process of sorting out the businesses that both met the criteria and offered the best opportunity for success. The judges included:

- Kristine Shuman, Business Development Manager, MidCoast Regional Redevelopment Authority
- Lee Cheever, Operations Manager, Maine Center for Entrepreneurial Development
- Sarah Ruef-Lindquist, Chief Executive Officer, the Maine Women's Fund
- Wendy Estabrook, Director of Human Resources Shared Services at L.L.Bean

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the InnovateHER Challenge and are pleased with the results of our competition. On behalf of the judges, we offer this statement of support for Ms. Matthews as she moves to the next phase of this contest.

Yours Truly,



Eloise Vitelli

Director, Program and Policy