

Lansing Economic Area Partnership  
Tony A. Willis, Director of New Economy Division  
1000 South Washington Avenue, Suite 201  
Lansing, Michigan 48910



Dear Office of Women's Business Ownership,

The Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) is proud to present the Office of Women's Business Ownership with Ms. Nikki Thompson Frazier's Sweet Encounter Bakery Café. At our local InnovateHER competition in Lansing, MI, our judges represented widely diverse business backgrounds, including the Small Business Development Center Tech Team, Lansing's Black Chamber of Commerce and Capital Area Michigan Works—all of whom were in full support of Sweet Encounter.

As being a judge for over 50 business pitch events with over 300 participants, Ms. Thompson Frazier is hands down one of the top five presenters I have seen. Not only does she capture and retain her audience's attention, her pitch demands her audience to understand and feel the importance of Sweet Encounter. Within the last two months, Ms. Thompson Frazier won three competitions totaling \$11,000 plus a variety of free legal, accounting and marketing services. On top of this, she is in the running to win an additional \$10,000 in another business pitch competition called Hatched. Putting her own financial savings of \$30,000 on the line, she is a true entrepreneur and sincerely stands behind her business. Additionally, Ms. Thompson Frazier is currently working with Michigan's Capital Region Small Business Development Center to secure an \$80,000 loan with the purpose of opening up a storefront.

**Has a measurable impact on the lives of women and families:**

- Over 15 million Americans have food allergies. According to a study released in 2013 by the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, food allergies among children increased approximately 50% between 1997 and 2011. Nearly 1 in 13 children have food allergies. Ms. Thompson Frazier, whose children have seven different food allergies, knows firsthand the benefit of having a local restaurant that caters to her family's needs. Because women make up nearly half of the labor force, and due to the fact that there are an increasing amount of households that have two working parents, there simply isn't time to stress over preparing safe and healthy meals for children with allergies. Sweet Encounter gives these moms and families healthy and safe food options for their children.

**Has the potential for commercialization:**

- A close competitor with Sweet Encounter, Grand Traverse Pie Company, is a bakery/café in Michigan and Indiana. They offer many of the same services as Sweet Encounter—pastries, lunch menu, caters events, markets word of mouth—and have successfully commercialized with 15 locations. The advantage of Sweet Encounter over Grand Traverse Pie Company is Sweet Encounter offers countless more gluten free options, has on site event planning and sells cakes—offering both a more diversified selection and additional revenue sources. Because of the similarity between these two businesses, yet given Sweet Encounter's competitive advantage, Sweet Encounter has the potential to commercialize.

**Fills a need in the marketplace:**

- Gluten-free is more than a craze. In dollars and cents, sales of gluten-free products were expected to total \$10.5 billion last year, according to Mintel, a market research company, which estimates the category will produce more than \$15 billion in annual sales in 2016. Gluten-free bakery and confectionery products represent 46% of the total gluten-free products volume share. This is followed by gluten-free snacks at 20% (marketsandmarkets.com). This is the perfect opportunity for Sweet Encounter to seize a growing share of this market in the Greater Lansing, Michigan area as more and more people desire gluten-free bakery items.

LEAP was honored to partner with the SBA in hosting a local InnovateHER competition. LEAP is proud to present you with Sweet Encounter Bakery Café for the Semi-Final Round. Just as Ms. Thompson Frazier captivated us with her compelling pitch and true entrepreneurial spirit, we are confident that the reviewers will have similar thoughts through reviewing her business plan. We have no doubts about the potential that Ms. Nikki Thompson Frazier holds regarding both having a positive measurable impact on the lives of women and families and running a sustainable and successful business.

Respectfully and Cheers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony A. Willis', is positioned above a faint, light blue circular stamp. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Tony A. Willis, Director of New Economy Division