



Local entrepreneur seeks to foster Norcross tech innovation with grants, office space—and guidance.

July 22, 2011 - How would you like to have a modern, modular workspace—surrounded by innovators in the technology field—for one year free of charge, no strings attached?

Local serial entrepreneur Leland Strange could make that happen for some young companies. He, along with Gwinnett Innovation Park, are taking applicants for their new Nspire Program, which would give budding tech companies free workspace and professional guidance, as well as make them eligible for \$100,000 in grant funds to build their business.

They just want to give area entrepreneurs a “fighting chance” of becoming successful in tough times, according to their materials.



“We designed our Nspire Program to provide entrepreneurs with a chance to focus on their business for a year without worrying about overhead costs,”

said Marcy Powers, operations manager for Gwinnett Innovation Park.

The program could have periphery benefits for Norcross, creating smart local jobs, since the businesses would likely be growing--and, hopefully, hiring. “Norcross would increase its small business population, which is really a driving force for economies,” said Sharon Cuppett, spokesperson for Gwinnett Innovation Park.

The Park is an “open-plan” environment with a very modern feel, says Powers. The workspace would be shared with other companies and include an “entrepreneurs’ hub” with workstations. The space will include an onsite director and facilities staff, eight conference rooms, a phone and security system and high-speed Internet, among other amenities.

Companies that move into the space will also be made eligible for the Founders Grant, to be given out to four companies in \$25,000 increments once a quarter. Another perk of the program is the mentoring and coffee cooler talk with existing tenants. “It is an ongoing, very informal process right now. We have an open-door policy,” said Powers, mentioning that the program would seek to create more of a playbook for this. “With the Nspire grants, we’ll set time aside,” she said.

After the year’s up, it would be up to the business to decide the next move. “Obviously they don’t have to stay—there are no strings attached—but we would like for them to,” said Powers. “From our perspective, it is really cool to see our companies grow and change.”

Innovative local businesses, like [Wi-Ex](#), which produces cell phone booster signals, and [CoreCard Software](#), a boutique credit card management company, would be the lucky tenants’ neighbors in the space.

Technology companies are being considered for the Nspire grant. To apply, email applicant@gwinnettinnovationpark.com.