

# Entrepreneurs get an earful on funding help

**Nashua** | Businesses hear how to find money to aid their company's needs.

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NASHUA – Bill Bench has been looking for funding sources to help him grow his electronic forensic business.

Thanks to a forum Tuesday sponsored by Nashua's Office of Economic Development, Bench may have found two.

Bench, a managing director and partner at Windham-based DataInquiry, said two of the four sources of funding outlined at Tuesday's seminar, "Growth Capital Resources in New Hampshire," match up with his needs – investment capital for sales and technology.

His company offers computer forensics to public agencies, lawyers, business, and others.

"I thought it was outstanding, very informative," Bench said after the two-hour-long program. "I think there may be an opportunity for some funding for us."

About 100 people – mostly entrepreneurs – attended the seminar, held in the upstairs banquet facility at Martha's Exchange on Main Street. Panelists Michael Gurau of CEI Community Ventures, John Hamilton of the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund, Mary Collins of the New Hampshire Small Business Development Center and Jesse Devitt of The Borealis Fund, outlined the venture capital process talked about innovation and technology grants.

"I think if it stimulates either new companies or helps to aid existing companies, it helps the city and its resi-

dents," said Carol Anderson, chief financial officer for the city.

After the session, she noted that very few young people attended.

"A lot of young people have ideas, but if they don't have the capital or the funds, that idea dies," she said.

One of the two programs DataInquiry's Bench will look into is a New Hampshire Community Loan Fund program called "Vested For Growth," which gives loans of up to \$500,000 to companies anywhere in New Hampshire who "invest in their people," or involve employees in making business decisions.

"We believe a group of engaged employees boosts performance," said Hamilton, who leads the Vested for Growth program.

"We focus on those businesses that are growing, but are looking for assistance," said Mary Collins, the state director for the SBDC.

Both small businesses and individuals can go after Small Business Innovative Research funding.

Devitt, of The Borealis Fund, said that fund targets technology-focused businesses that will create thousand of jobs in northern New England, such as the next PC Connection or Cabletron.