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Free Online Tool Aims to Help Businesses Succeed in Las Cruces

By *Finance New Mexico*

The City of Las Cruces wants local entrepreneurs to know about a new software tool that can help them succeed by accurately assessing how their existing or prospective business compares to industry competitors.

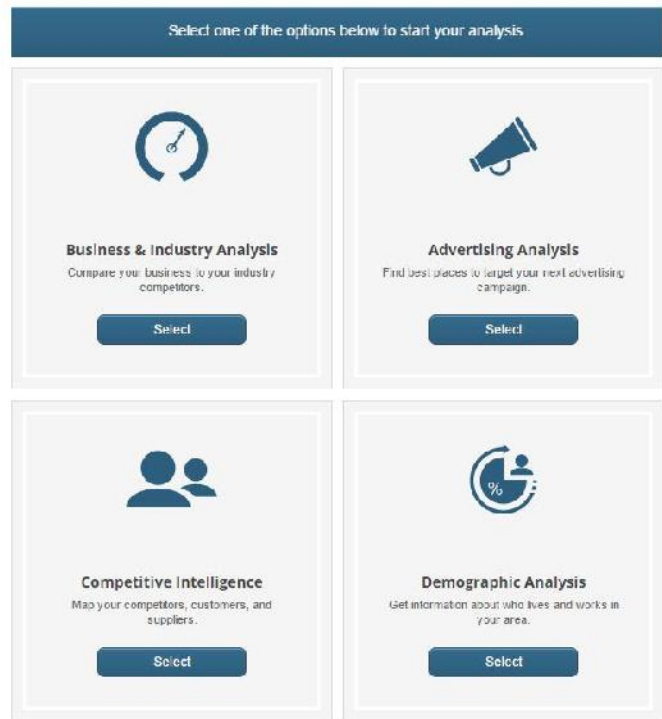
The Web-based program, SizeUp, gives users immediate access to reliable data from public and private sources that they can use to make informed business decisions and write reality-based business plans.

SizeUp has an interactive map that allows businesses to benchmark their performance against that of their competitors, decide where advertising messages are most likely to be seen by their target audience and identify where to find customers, competitors and suppliers.

A business, for example, can learn how much its competitors spend on labor and health insurance, where they get their supplies and how much revenue they earn. This information can help the owner decide where to open an outlet and what types of benefits to offer to be most competitive.

This is the kind of data large corporations crunch all the time before moving into a new market or introducing a new product or service. It's available at no cost to small businesses in Las Cruces thanks to the city's contractual agreement with the private tech company that created the software.

SizeUp is an alternative for businesses that don't have the resources to hire a consultant or a technician trained in geographic information system (GIS) mapping, said Cruz Ramos, an economic development specialist for the city.



“This tool is a piece of cake,” he said. “As you plug in variables, the data start to appear. You can toggle between (considerations for) a startup and an established business. You can use it for a business you’re considering to see if the anticipated revenue is realistic based on what similar businesses are making in Las Cruces, and that helps you develop a business plan in line with what the economy will bear.”

Arianna Parsons, director of the Downtown Las Cruces Partnership and co-owner of a downtown coffee shop, sees potential for businesses to benefit from the information they find on SizeUp.

“That level of data can be daunting,” she said. “But this opens up a wealth of information that can be used for end-of-year planning and (tracking) sales trends.”

Cathie Fern, chairwoman of SCORE, received training in the tool so she could help clients who approach her organization for mentorship.

SCORE mentors help people all over the skill and experience spectrum, Fern said. “We can show we have a tool they can use right away online — and how simple it is to use. Planning a business has lots to do with location and how to find your market. SizeUp allows you to do that.”

The city’s Economic Development Office introduced SizeUp in August through a series of public events and training sessions. It’s one of many resources in the city’s Economic Gardening program, which aims to assist local businesses.

Businesses can find the tool on the city’s website at <http://www.las-cruces.org/sizeup>. For additional information about SizeUp or other city business assistance programs, contact econdev@las-cruces.org or Cruz Ramos at cramos@las-cruces.org.

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