

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **CenterState CEO and SyracuseFirst Evolve Relationship to Better Serve Small and Local Businesses**

**SYRACUSE, NY** – After more than five years of collaboration, CenterState CEO and SyracuseFirst announced today that SyracuseFirst has become a fully integrated program of CenterState CEO. Under this new agreement CenterState CEO will fully acquire the SyracuseFirst brand moving it from a separate membership entity to a program under CenterState CEO’s business development portfolio.

“Across Central New York, small businesses are an important driver of our regional economy as they create jobs and attract investments,” said Andrew Fish, senior vice president of business development at CenterState CEO. “We are excited to formally adopt the SyracuseFirst brand and to restructure the organization so we can become an even stronger advocate for independent and locally owned businesses.”

The two organizations formed a legal partnership in 2012 to advance their shared goals of supporting small and locally owned independent businesses. Under the original agreement CenterState CEO licensed the SyracuseFirst brand keeping it a separate membership based entity. CenterState CEO, in return, provided significant programmatic and administrative support to SyracuseFirst and its executive director, Chris Fowler.

Fowler has stepped aside and CenterState CEO will continue to provide member programs that support small and locally owned businesses including:

- Connections and networking events like Tech Meets Taste, Speed Networking and Business After Hours & Showcase
- Advertising opportunities, including the CNY Community Guide, and CenterState CEO newsletters, e-blasts and websites
- Talent support and professional development programs
- CEO Ambassadors program
- Economic Champions Luncheon
- Advocacy programs
- The Tech Garden and its ecosystem of support programs, and additional entrepreneurial support services for small businesses

“Even though I will no longer be the executive director of SyracuseFirst, I am not stepping down from my commitment to small and independently owned businesses, said Fowler. “I believe SyracuseFirst’s integration into CenterState CEO’s programming enables it to evolve and grow,

which will ultimately support a more vibrant community. Regardless of what opportunities I am pursuing, I will always remain a vocal advocate for these businesses which contribute to our community's unique identity and culture.”

A new steering committee will be established to guide the future direction of SyracuseFirst programming. The new steering committee will also evaluate all current SyracuseFirst programs and determine ways to enhance resources and add value for locally-owned independent member businesses. If you have any questions, or are a current SyracuseFirst member interested in having a role on the steering committee please be in touch with Andrew Fish at [afish@centerstateceo.com](mailto:afish@centerstateceo.com).

### **About CenterState CEO**

CenterState CEO is an independent and forward thinking economic development strategist, business leadership organization and chamber of commerce; dedicated to the success of its members and the prosperity of the region. We serve as an advocate and resource for smart business, catalyze and facilitate regional growth, and promote community prosperity through results-driven partnerships, planning and problem-solving. [www.centerstateceo.com](http://www.centerstateceo.com)

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