



Rural Entrepreneurship and Applied Technology Program Overview White Paper, CBED Report 04-06-002 (Revision of June 24, 2004)

This is one of a series of White Papers on issues of interest to the Center of Business and Economic Development (CBED) and the ESU School of Business. Each White Paper summarizes readings, analysis and synthesis by the Director, William L. Smith, Ph.D., for discussion, to provide background information to direct our planning processes and to build content for the Center web site at:

<http://www.emporia.edu/business/ibed/center/>

Rural Entrepreneurship and Applied Technology (REAT)

The **Program** (concept), the **Project** (implementation), and the **Center** (long-term goal) will demonstrate the concept in its implementation toward the long-term goal.

This **Program Overview White Paper** is intended to share a concept for a program of activities to be carried out on behalf of the ESU School of Business through the Center for Business and Economic Development (CBED). The program will be implemented through a **Project** described in more detail in the next paper in this series. The eventual, long-term goal is to become recognized by KTEC¹ as a “**Center of Excellence**” at ESU – but that must be earned, it can not be “declared.” In addition, one or more additional projects will be defined and implemented related to content and context for the entrepreneurial activities encouraged by the REAT program. One of these, a rural tourism development project, the “Flint Hills Triangle: Where Nature and History Come Alive,” will be discussed briefly near the end of this paper (and presented in more detail in a separate paper).

Let’s first look at the four words in the title of this program:

Rural – Our service area is primarily rural, but the unique mix of rural and urban elements creates a special challenge that will need to be carefully addressed at an early stage of development. This is the identifier for our geographic area of emphasis.

Entrepreneurship – A program to identify and nurture people with dreams and a plan to start a new business or expand existing businesses, in their community; not a new concept but one that is taking on new meaning in Kansas in the 21st century.² This is the identifier for our primary activity focus.

¹ Kansas Technology Enterprise Corporation, see more at: <http://www.ktec.com/>

² See CBED Report 04-06-001, “Entrepreneurship, Rural Entrepreneurship, Enterprise Facilitation Overview White Paper,” for additional background information.



Applied – At ESU we do primarily applied research as contrasted with basic research.

Technology – We will use the KTEC definition of Technology: “Technology is defined as the sum of knowledge of the means and methods of producing goods and services. We will apply these means and methods, already existing, in new ways and in new places.”

This concept provides the best opportunity for the CBED and the ESU School of Business to use existing and potential personnel resources and expertise to achieve a measurable degree of “Excellence.” This will begin with existing technical assistance, research, teaching, and grantsmanship capabilities and expand each of the areas through the program described below.

The initial implementation of the **REAT Program** is described here which will be carried out in four simultaneous Phases as the **REAT Project**³:

Phase A. Community Education
Phase C. Grantsmanship

Phase B. Faculty Research
Phase D. Publicity and Integration

Let us now look at each of these Phases, in order, in overview:

Phase A. Community Education

Community Education, as used in this title, is a very broad term embodying K-16 education programs, lifelong learning from childhood to the golden years, technical assistance in all forms, and any other form that can be identified and utilized. The following paragraphs present some of these efforts as envisioned today:

The Small Business Development Center will continue to provide business start-up workshops on a regular basis, such as those conducted in late June 2004. These are free or at a very small charge to members of the community and are conducted in several formats throughout the calendar year.

A structured presentation of the REAT process will be developed and presented in a series of workshops, for particular audiences, such as senior citizens, artisans or crafters. Also, a special version of the presentation will be available for SIFE Team student presentations in the middle schools and the high schools in the area.

The REAT Process is based on a six element format, including three functional elements: Marketing, Finance and Operations, along with three leadership elements: People, Management Team, and Board of Advisors. The process also places a strong emphasis on

³ See CBED Report 04-06-003, “Rural Entrepreneurship and Applied Technology Project Overview White Paper, for more details.



the use of personal networking techniques to allow each of the elements to be most effective.

The Entrepreneurship oriented coursework offered by ESU will undergo continued review and enhancement as appropriate. Courses have been added to the 2004-2005 academic schedule. These will also be evaluated and continued or modified as necessary.

Phase B. Faculty Research

Good faculty research is one of the requisites prior to being considered for designation as a Center of Excellence by KTEC. Beginning in the fall semester of 2004, it is planned to involve several faculty members in survey research in this subject area as part of a Faculty Development program, using a seven step process of involvement: Literature Review, Question Formulation, Survey Method/Audience Determination, Statistical Analysis, Write-Up Results/Conclusions, Review Manuscripts, Managing Submissions. Graduate assistant time has also been allocated to assisting in this process.

Among the subjects of this research will be attitudes of local citizens (in identified subgroups, such as local officials, business leaders, those in the education community, existing and potential entrepreneurs, support services, etc.), an updated compilation and evaluation of support services, evaluation of existing programs in the community, and reactions of the local communities to innovative approaches to rural entrepreneurship and applied technology.

Phase C. Grantsmanship

The CBED has underway this summer and fall of 2004 a partnership with The ESU Research and Grants Center to enhance the capabilities of the School of Business to identify funding agencies and prepare grant proposals to the benefit of the university, the region, and the state of Kansas.

The search for appropriate grants, from government, foundations, or other sources will continue, with a major focus in the areas of rural entrepreneurship and applied technology. The search will include collaboration with other researchers to partner on larger grant requests. These efforts will also be done in concert with other related fund-raising efforts, including overall entrepreneurship, endowed professorships, etc.

In addition, partnering opportunities with scientists and other persons with technical expertise, both on campus and throughout the community, will be sought to provide new opportunities for entrepreneurship and technology transfer for purposes of eventual commercialization.



Phase D. Publicity and Integration

An integral part of the REAT program is to carefully document all phases of the program and to actively work toward a high level of integration and synergy – to maximize the benefits to the university and the community from the base of our limited resources.

As each Phase of the program is integrated with the others and properly documented, appropriate publicity will be created and promoted to achieve maximum synergy from all activities. The program cannot operate in an “ivory tower” – it must be out in the community and the community needs to be fully engaged in the process.

Additional Projects under the REAT Program

As the REAT Program is further developed and implemented, additional projects will be created. One that is already being conceptualized, as mentioned above, is a rural tourism development project, the “Flint Hills Triangle: Where Nature and History Come Alive.”⁴ The REAT Program encourages interest in rural entrepreneurship and applied technology – here in the service industries, serving rural tourism, creating complete tourism packages, incorporating coordination and cooperation among community leaders and businesses, and new growth opportunities, built on local talent and local resources.

Summary and Implications

We have found that programs that are named and clearly articulated have a much greater chance of success. That has been the intent with this paper. Subsequent papers and activity will be directed at implementation of the concepts shared in this paper. Comments, positive and negative, are encouraged. Open dialogue also contributes to success of any program.

⁴ See CBED Report 04-06-004, “Flint Hills Triangle: Where Nature and History Come Alive” Overview White Paper,” for additional information. This is a tourism development project that features many area main street communities, historical sites and the Tall Grass Prairie National Preserve (and other nature sites) as a tourism destination site - on your state highway map, the triangle is from Wichita up the turnpike through Emporia to Topeka/Lawrence, west through Manhattan to Salina, south on I-135 back to Wichita - the Flint Hills Triangle (comparable to, perhaps, the Ozarks or the Black Hills).