



Rogers State University Innovation Center

RSU Innovation Center

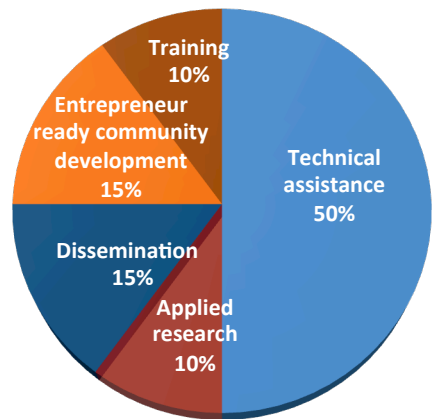
Rogers State University's (RSU) EDA Center is housed within the campus's Innovation Center, which is charged with fostering economic development and addressing the educational needs of area business and industry. The Innovation Center provides business counseling services and training for area entrepreneurs and expanding businesses in northeastern Oklahoma.

Activities

The Center has a focus on entrepreneurship, and it delivers services both to communities and to entrepreneurs/small businesses. At the community level, the Center has launched an Entrepreneur Ready Community Development Program, which aims to create a corridor of certified entrepreneur ready communities in the region. This program includes multi-stage process technical assistance and training that leads to certification, with the goal of certifying one community per year. The Center hosts an annual conference to train and disseminate information to communities about the importance of entrepreneurship and

economic gardening.

For small businesses and entrepreneurs, the Center provides technical assistance and support services to help them become sustainable, job-creating entities. This assistance is delivered through a variety of channels, including business skills workshops, an online Entrepreneur Development program, customized business-/industry-specific



training, and individual counseling sessions (in person or via the Internet). The Center also conducts applied research to support specific needs of businesses, nonprofits, and/or industries, including support for feasibility studies, grant proposals, and public policy decisions. The Center's

University

Rogers State University

Center Director

Jeri Koehler

Center Location

Outreach Unit

Center since 2010

Center Activities

- Entrepreneurship support
- Economic gardening
- Technical assistance
- Applied research
- Information dissemination

Clients

- Communities
- Entrepreneurs
- Small businesses
- County/city officials
- Economic development organizations

Assessment Techniques

- Client surveys
- Client interviews
- Case studies
- Informal feedback

Contact Information

Rogers

www.rsu.edu/innovation/
innovation@rsu.edu

information dissemination is done through a monthly report of regional economic indicators, county profile reports, social media, and other channels.

Leveraging

Alliances with community leaders and a variety of local public and private stakeholders are essential for delivering the Center's Entrepreneur Ready program. The Center partners with a wide variety of agencies (such as the Northeast Technology Center, the Cherokee Nation, and Northeast

OK A&M College) to deliver small business training and workshops, applied research, and other assistance services. The Center has formed an alliance with local economic development organizations and the National Center for Economic Gardening to deliver its assistance to second-stage businesses in the region, and it utilizes SCORE counselors with industry-specific expertise to deliver business counseling.

"Timely and responsive with the key information we were seeking.

Understood our need and helped us where we couldn't help ourselves."

--Center Client

Success

Entrepreneur-Ready Community Certification Program

RSU's Innovation Center offers an Entrepreneur-Ready Community Certification Program that provides planning assistance and training to communities to create entrepreneur friendly environments. The target audience is communities of less than 20,000 residents in an economically distressed region of northeastern Oklahoma. The first community, Claremore, went through the 15-month process and obtained certification in January 2013. The Center led the community's strategic planning activities and provided technical assistance in the areas of local finance, workforce, and entrepreneurship mentoring. Entrepreneurial support training

was provided for community leaders and linkages were strengthened with regional, state, and federal resource providers. Claremore's local entrepreneurial support system was strengthened through the establishment of a one-stop office to coordinate and conduct business development programs and to work directly with local entrepreneurs. When a community or region receives certification, it can begin using the certification in marketing programs, business recruitment, and other appropriate venues. In the case of Claremore, the town needed to change its business unfriendly image, and a very public celebration of the certification was planned to explain the benefits and secure media coverage of the rebranded

image. According to Claremore Mayor Mickey Perry, "We believe this will help us grow and support more businesses and send the message that businesses are welcome and appreciated in Claremore."

RSU Innovation Center's Entrepreneur Ready Community Certification Program provides the guidance and support needed by communities to reap the benefits of entrepreneurial activity, including job creation, attraction of entrepreneurs, and retention of talent and money that might otherwise leak away to other communities.