



KSBDC offers free, low-cost education in entrepreneurial skills

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Fall is back-to-school time and the Kansas Small Business Development Center has numerous resources for entrepreneurs to gain skills and knowledge in all areas of starting, maintaining, closing or expanding a business.

The statewide host for the KSBDC is Fort Hays State University.

One of the most popular services provided by the KSBDC is free one-on-one business consulting.

"Consultants with the KSBDC are an excellent resource for anyone looking into starting a business or needing assistance with an existing business," said Wally Kearns, KSBDC state director. "Our consultants have a diverse skill set and work together to provide the entrepreneur the most comprehensive services possible."

In an effort to serve more clients, especially in rural parts of the state, new outreach centers have opened in Andover, Greensburg, Liberal, Wetmore and Winfield. The KSBDC Network is now eight regional centers and nine outreach centers.

"We hope to open one more outreach center by the end of 2009. With the addition of the new outreach centers," said Kearns "Our consultants will be able to serve more clients and learn more about the communities in which their clients live and work."

In addition to business consulting, each center offers low-cost seminars and workshops in traditional areas of entrepreneurship and in areas of interest based on issues and trends in current events. For example, in response to an increased demand for information about rural tourism or agritourism, the North Central Kansas Outreach Center in Concordia (NCK SBDC) recently partnered with Kansas Crossroads Resource Conservation and Development Area Inc. to provide informational meetings for anyone in north central Kansas interested in exploring such a business.

"We were encouraged that nearly 70 people attended the meetings," said Linda Sutton of the NKC SBDC. "The majority of attendees either had existing rural tourism businesses they were looking to take to the next level or had very viable concepts they would like to explore."

"Our support does not stop there, however. We are following with an in-depth, five day workshop to provide those interested the tools needed to develop and implement their plans," she said. "As always, the NKC SBDC will also provide one-on-one consultation to each of these businesses on an ongoing basis. Our goal is not just to help a business get started but rather to see it through to success and future growth."

Another service offered by the KSBDC is the ability for eligible veterans to use GI Bill

benefits to take KSBDC courses. Veterans can check with the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs to find out which courses have been approved. Johnson County Community College KSBDC currently offers "How to Start and Manage a Home Based Business" and the "FastTrac Business Plan" course for non-credit.

Entrepreneurs who do not have a schedule that allows for taking a class can take advantage of free online training. Twenty-six courses feature audio and high-end graphics. The courses are available anytime and are categorized into three areas: "Starting Your Business," "Managing Your Finances" and "Foundations of Marketing." The most popular course offered is "Developing a Business Plan." Many of the courses are also offered in Spanish.

A complete listing of KSBDC center locations and training calendars can be found on the KSBDC website.

The KSBDC Network is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Kansas Department of Commerce. KSBDC is nationally accredited through the Association of Small Business Development Centers by congressional mandate. KSBDC receives funding from and partners with higher education and economic development organizations to provide Kansas entrepreneurs with no-cost business consulting and resources for starting, maintaining and growing their businesses.

For more information about the KSBDC Network visit <http://www.kansas.gov/ksbdc> or call (877) 625-7232.

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