Southern Region Rural Entrepreneurship
Roundtable Sessions

San Marcos, TX

September 27, 2005

Attendees: 17

Sponsor:
Southern Rural Development Center

Hosts:
Texas Cooperative Extension Service
Southern Rural Development Center

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San Marcos, TX Listening Session  
September 27, 2005

Summary

The San Marcos, TX Entrepreneurship Roundtable was held on September 27, 2005 at the Hays County Extension Office. Sixteen small business service providers attended the session and provided input on the following topics:

The Three Key Topics You Address In Your Work
Input regarding the typical issues that these small business service providers force focused on three distinct categories. Many topics dealt with community and networking issues that centered around entrepreneurship and small business development. These included identifying and securing funding for community resources and opportunities (including infrastructure) and the development of networking arrangements between various community factors.

The second set of issues identified by the participants centered around the provision of business assistance services. These issues ranged from facilitating the creation of new businesses and expansion of existing ones to workforce development and training. Finally, the majority of topics identified for this question centered around issues in business operations. While the most often-mentioned topic was obtaining financing, business startup analysis, marketing, and sector-specific business issues were also frequently mentioned.

Major Audiences You Target In Your Work
Four distinct audiences were identified. Community leaders included Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Boards, community leaders and policy makers, and non-profits. Business-related audiences primarily included business owners and potential business owners, but it also included service providers. The other audiences consisted of community residents and the educational system.

Three Products You Use To Support Your Work
Participants listed a wide variety of products that were used to support their efforts with targeted audiences. While business-related products such as training curriculum, websites, tools, and funding legislation topped the list. Participants also made heavy use of methods, tools, and programs targeted to civic and governmental entities that target community resources such as infrastructure.

The best resources that participants utilized in their work primarily focused around organizational and support agencies such as the Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship and federally sponsored programs including the Small Business Development Centers.

Future of Entrepreneurship
The participants felt that the development of a community that is supportive of entrepreneurship is a factor that is critical to the strengthening of entrepreneurship in their communities. Communities must be united in their vision for entrepreneurship and that rural leaders must have resources with which to work. Other factors deemed critical included developing
coaching/mentoring support systems for entrepreneurs, developing an educated workforce, and enhanced training for small businesses.

**Entrepreneur – Friendly Communities**
Participants feel that the most significant factor in developing entrepreneur friendly communities is a change in the economic development policies of rural communities. In many cases, the primary economic development policy of rural communities is recruitment of medium to heavy manufacturing. Participants felt that this viewpoint should be changed to developing an entrepreneurship mentality for the community’s leaders and residents.

This view was emphasized by the policies that the participants formulated as well as the envisioned networks. A preponderance of formulated policies dealt with either providing financing to startup, existing, or expanding entrepreneurs or enhancing entrepreneurship support through increased levels of training or by fostering a spirit of commitment to entrepreneurship in at the local and state levels. Furthermore, many of the envisioned networks targeted local communities as well as the provision of technical assistance service to startup and expanding businesses.

**Further Efforts by the SRDC and the TCRE**
Participants at the roundtable session led very specific thought about the roles that the Southern Rural Development Center and the Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship should play in the development of an entrepreneurship initiative in the South Texas Region. Participants felt that the SRDC should focus on cooperation and communication with entities that focus on strengthening entrepreneurs and small business activities and the development of educational and research products to strengthen the entrepreneurial sells of the region. While the TCRE was also asked to develop educational and research products, it was also asked to become much more involved in increasing local community awareness and provide technical assistance to entrepreneurial forms, as well as striving to develop networks that help entrepreneurs succeed.

**Follow-up**
Participants seemed to be energized by the change to share their views with like-minded individuals at the roundtable. Many of the plans shared by participants concerned becoming more involved in networking and communication activities. Furthermore, many respondents indicated that they were planning to explore the possibility of facilitating the redirection of state economic development funds from industrial recruitment to entrepreneurship.
Round 1
Current Entrepreneurship Activities
Three Key Topics You Address in Your Work

- **Community/Networking Issues**
  - Assessing community resources to support entrepreneurship
  - Develop interest going from communities being entrepreneurship-neutral to entrepreneurship-friendly
  - Community downtown development (personal) not work related
  - Building supportive communities
  - Cooperative arrangements
  - Networking resources
  - Building capacity
  - Identify funding for community projects
  - Funding entrepreneurship support/infrastructure in place filling in the gaps
  - Infrastructure
  - Addressing resource concerns
  - Define technologies ripe for economic development – translate for lay people and community leaders
  - Rural opportunities
  - Rural organizations
  - Border concerns
  - Community planning for recreation

- **Business Assistance**
  - Starting new businesses
  - Business creation/funding
  - Assisting existing companies to grow
  - Business planning
  - Referral to resources
  - Assistance via SBDC, connectivity (e.g., IC2 Institute) – Bringing in business
  - Providing training needed by employees
  - Assist with basic needs related to workforce
  - Skill development (welding, computers)
  - Provide on-going support in pre-screening applicants
  - Working with “challenged” audiences

- **Business Operations**
  - Business plan
  - Business startup and capitalization
  - How to get started
  - Finance
  - Identifying borrowers through SBDCs
  - Obtaining financing
  - How to get funding
- How to find/acquire/establish/pay for facility
- Borrower needs – identifying financial needs and realistic returns
- Lack of management training/experience of small entrepreneurs
- Supervisory training
- Marketing
- Marketing assistance
- Guidance for entrepreneurs – marketing assistance
- Healthcare
- Training
- Customer service training
- Economic efficiency in farm and ranch operations
- Home-based/micro/youth businesses
- Nature tourism/value-added

**Major Audiences You Target in Your Work**

- **Community Leaders**
  - Chambers of commerce
  - Local economic development boards
  - Economic development colleagues
  - Economic development professionals
  - Economic development directors
  - Community leaders
  - Community leaders
  - Community leaders
  - Community leaders
  - Community leaders
  - Public officials
  - City council
  - Policymakers
  - Rural judges
  - County Extension agents
  - Chambers of commerce
  - Volunteer fire departments
  - Municipalities
  - Non-profits
  - Non-profits (cities, community services, chambers of commerce, hospitals, larger businesses)

- **Local Residents**
  - Local people in Taylor and surrounding communities
  - Rural residents
  - Job seekers
  - Families
  - Youth

- **Businesses**
  - Business owners
o Business owners
o Existing businesses
o Established employers
o Existing companies needing to change directions or startup a new division because of changing technology
o Emerging employers
o Entrepreneurs
o Nascent entrepreneurs
o Startup entrepreneurs
o Existing entrepreneurs
o Growth entrepreneurs
o Troubled entrepreneurs
o New businesses for computer training
o Very small companies just getting started
o Potential small business borrowers
o SBDC and other resources that identify potential borrowers
o Existing business owners in small rural communities
o Troubled businesses
o Individuals wanting to start up
o Farmers and ranchers – ag operations
o Ag producers
o Landowners

- **Education**
  o Schools
  o School superintendent

**Three Products You Use to Support Your Work**

- **Civic and Governmental Entities**
  o Chambers of commerce
  o Non-governmental organizations
  o Local organizations – non-profits to develop grants
  o EGID, WHIP, BCRP
  o RC&D network
  o USDA networks
  o Governments
  o Texas Parks and Wildlife LIP program
  o RCWFDB
  o UT-IC2
  o Austin Community Development Corporation material (incubator kitchens)
  o Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
  o Economic development e-lists

- **Media**
  o Newspaper articles
  o Newsletters sent with utility bills
  o Radio discussions
• Networks
  o Like minded networks
  o Memberships in like-minded organizations
  o Personal contacts
  o People

• Business-Specific
  o Business planning
  o Website
  o Grants
  o Local banker for advice on loans for board (loan committee)
  o Internet – for information about loan programs
  o Workshops
  o “Glad I Could Help” customer service training products
  o Qual T product for customer service from SCINC tourism industry
  o Whale-Done Vision Point Communication and team building skills
  o Business planning workshops
  o One-on-one counseling
  o RMA and FisCal and SD SBDC financial tools

• Business Assistance
  o Economic development plan
  o Community assessments
  o Funding FC Grant Search program
  o Work-In-Texas
  o Workforce Investment Act (WIA-DW, Adult)
  o Wagner Paper (TWC)
  o Educational programs curriculum (existing INOW businesses, T-TEE???, Main Street On-Line)
  o SBDC – counseling for borrowers including business plans
  o Information databases – CorpTech, Hoovers, Factiva, business associated databases

Best Resources You Want People to Know About

• Local
  o Local chambers of commerce
  o Business and community organizations
  o Local bankers
  o Local economic development corporations
  o Work-in-Texas.com

• College/University
  o Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
  o TCRE
  o www.tcpre.org
  o County Extension Agents
  o MEP (Manufacturing Extension Partnership)
  o SBDCs
  o SBDC
o SBDC
o SBDC assistance
o SBA Centers
o UT-IC2
o IC2 Institute
o Virtual Incubator offered by the UT-IC2 Institute
o Community colleges
o Training courses offered at Temple College at Taylor
o RuPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

• Federal
  o USDA-RD
  o USDA-RD
  o Federal and state cost-share programs
  o RC&D
  o RC&D Councils
  o RC&D network
  o CRP and CSP green payments
  o Technology strategic planning – planning and decision making tools developed within U.S. intelligence community. We are adapting method for regional economic development. Excellent tool for knowing your resources, knowing your competitors resources, and develop a strategy to ??????

• Other
  o Referral to other resources
  o Business service representatives and employer services
  o Deliver other agency/group programs to rural communities
  o 8 common scenarios for point-of-contact, phone customer service

Facilitators’ Notes
Three Most Common Themes/Topics
  • Entrepreneurship friendly communities
  • Referral/networking
  • Training/education
  • Business support and training
  • Bringing expertise to communities
  • Identify opportunities and methods for implementation
  • Assessing Community Resources and Building Infrastructure
  • Training regarding services or specific skills
  • Infrastructure/finance

Most Innovative/Unique Topics
  • TCRE
  • Build bridge between universities/colleges and economic development boards
  • DeGoLa RC&D revolving loan program to fill financing gap for new businesses
  • Act as regions and networks within and without regional areas for global and regional connections
• Border issues – working with special target audiences

The Three “Cream of the Crop” Resources or Products
• TCRE as source
• TCRE
• Internet, especially tcre.org
• Government programs
• SBDC/community colleges as resources for leaders and curriculum for training
• Support agencies, especially SBDC
• USDA as source of grants
• Volunteers/people

Round 2
If I Had Three Wishes!
What I Would Love to See Happen to Strengthen Entrepreneurship in My Community, State, or Region

You have been granted the special powers to “make things happen”!! What THREE wishes would you personally grant that would have a positive impact on entrepreneurship in your community, state, or Southern region? Share your ideas with the group at your World Café table.

• Community Assistance
  o Demonstrate what an entrepreneur can accomplish (encourage people to try)
  o Develop a network for entrepreneurs to share resources
  o Cooperative development assistance
  o A venue for entrepreneurs to come together and establish “combined” businesses (e.g., music, art, restaurants)
  o Provide resources needed by the entrepreneurs (e.g., planning, legal, accounting)
  o Trial and/or temporary facilities for businesses that don’t need a 24/7 facility
  o Support service for entrepreneurs of all kinds
  o Community mentoring/peer group
  o Experience – working knowledge to share with those starting up their businesses with local considerations in account such as marketing
  o Agency cooperation
  o Training local officials – to resolve impractical rules and limitations
  o Consistent coordinated systems with support for components
  o Resources for easy ???
  o Endowments
  o Support for groups in completing their mission
  o Regular meeting/consulting time
  o High quality schools

• Business Operations
  o Business planning instruction
  o Write plan
  o On-site training for businesses in trouble (rapid response team)
• Startup financing
• Target some 4A/4B money to small businesses
• Money – a way of organizing and a knowledge of where money can be located
• Local source of finance (community venture fund)
• Trained Personnel – for businesses to provide a quality product
• Educate on planning

Group Reports
• Supportive and united community
• Easy access to abundant resources
• A known resource for rural leaders to help potential businesses. A change in “get the big one” attitude
• Develop support group – coach – for entrepreneurs who want to start up
• Teach entrepreneurs how to be successful before they start spending money, not after they have gone bust and are in debt
• An educated workforce

Round 3
Creating Entrepreneur-Friendly Communities – Places That Are Doing It Right!
New Ideas for Building Entrepreneur Friendly-Communities!

Think of a community that you would identify as “entrepreneur friendly.” What is this community doing specifically that makes it a great place for entrepreneurs? Try to think of at least 2-3 examples of “entrepreneur friendly” activities this community is undertaking.

• Communities
  o Bastrop, Cameron, Georgetown, Salado
  o Bastrop
  o Buda
  o Cameron
  o Cuero
    ▪ Active economic development corporation
    ▪ Revolving loan fund
    ▪ Technology center with business incubator
  o Eden
    ▪ Come together as a group
    ▪ Formulate plan for support
    ▪ Enthusiastic recruitment
    ▪ Accepting attitude
  o El Campo
    ▪ Proactive recruitment of industry and business
    ▪ Invites new businesses in where many small towns are governed by a few majority owners that drive businesses and don’t want new businesses to come in (fear of competition)
- El Campo proves this is not the case and new businesses promote more growth and has grown bigger than the county seat (Wharton)
  - Floresville – the local EDC provides support and the community embraces new businesses and partners
  - Floresville
  - Fredericksburg
  - Georgetown
  - Hays
  - Hutto
  - Kerrville
  - Salado
  - Seguin – chamber provides support; strong partnerships
  - Seguin
  - ??? – utilize government programs more
    - Act progressive and venture out to do more
    - They are able to see the long run benefits

- Other
  - Forming rural entrepreneurship alliance
  - Active economic development effort
  - Conducting community-based planning
  - Community development corporation/foundation
  - Cooperative civic leadership
  - Sponsoring Texas Rural Leadership Program
  - Thinks holistically
  - Political support – local (county and city)
  - Facilitates sharing of knowledge
  - Sponsoring e-commerce educational programs
  - Education
  - Entrepreneurship excellence through 4H for entrepreneurs
  - Local business support
  - Chamber assistance
  - Protect and embrace quality of life
  - EDC is geared toward infrastructure
  - Infrastructure capacity (workers, schools, broadband, healthcare, education)
  - Land availability
  - Population availability
  - Area amenities
  - Creative financing of existing owners – matching dollars for improvements
  - Revolving loan fund

As a team, select four key activities a community should undertake if it wants to become recognized as an “entrepreneurial friendly” locality.
- Community-based planning
- Implement plan
- Recognize its unique characteristics
• Recognize unique characteristics
• Embrace culture and the community
• Collaborative community culture
• Provide governmental guidelines – help to establish their business
• Coordinate local resources to focus on the common goal of being entrepreneurially friendly
• Economic development corporation
• Active chamber of commerce
• Strong chamber of commerce/business community
• In-place policies to have business and industry handle new demands on infrastructure (drainage, schools)
• Streamlined business development
• Streamlined business development processes including resolutions of conflicts
• Streamline business development
• Committed local leaders
• Elect pro-economic development officials
• Cooperative civic leadership
• Cooperative civic leadership
  o People – key stakeholders
  o Processes – business development, zoning, business permitting, certificate of occupancy
  o Programs – leadership, youth entrepreneurship, CCRS
• Provide financial assistance to start-up companies (loans, grants)
• Promote Junior Achievement programs

**What 3-4 activities can we (the people and organizations attending this roundtable session) do to help communities become entrepreneur friendly?**

- Community-based planning – resource team, Texas rural Leadership Program
- Changed paradigm for economic development
  - Cost/benefit analysis
  - Education
- Awareness of resources
- Coordination of resources
- Rural focus of resources
- Identify communities result demonstration field trip (e.g., Salado, Georgetown, etc.)
- Nurture youth entrepreneurship

**As a group, select the THREE most important wishes that you want the whole group attending this meeting to hear about.**

**Group Reports**

- Local response team
- Entrepreneurial support group (AA 12 step model for entrepreneurship)
- “Trial” incubator
• Syncubator for resources for entrepreneurs/small businesses (one stop shop) for dollars, knowledge
• Stock exchange for entrepreneurs (local pooling of resources from community to community)
• Supportive local, state, and federal policies and ordinances

For the “top three wishes,” identify what it will take to make these wishes a reality in your community, state, and/or Southern region.

Group Reports
• Change policy from funding only big to funding entrepreneurs and small businesses
• Supportive local, state, and federal policies and ordinances
• Need brain transplants, funerals, retirements
• “Trial” incubator
• Syncubator resources for entrepreneurs
• Local response team
• Statewide forum on rural entrepreneurship to change attitude toward economic development from “getting and funding the big one” to supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Networks
• Capital Access Networks – a state-wide network that would detail sources of money to fund start-up or expanding companies that don’t qualify for traditional bank loans
• Micro Investors Network – better/more efficient wedding of capital and ideas network of mid- and high-net worth individuals interested in investing in local, regional, and state businesses. Purpose: Investors can form syndicates to fund businesses through $5,000, $20,000, and $100,000 investments. Goal: Mobilize capital and develop investment options. Reduce risk for investors by sourcing deals through incubators, EDOs, Extension offices, etc.
  o Players: qualified investors – after methods are developed and experiments conducted model could be replicated.
• Network of those who understand and are willing to “work” toward development, not just talk.
  o Level: Should be started at the local level and then followed by the state, regional, and national levels.
  o Players: Should be comprised of civic leaders as well as religious leaders, youth, minorities, and of course educational leaders.
• A network for small and rural town development made up of communities that have accomplished success and ones that need help.
  o Level: Statewide and regional to reach out for new ideas but with similar concerns and issues to deal with. Interface giving each other ideas, support, contacts, funding connections.
  o Players: Should include community leaders, business owners (existing and new), political leaders, financial institutions. (1 vote)
• For local community leaders – To help overcome local issues in getting things done and help the community become more friendly to growth and development.
  o Level: Local
  o Players: Should include community leaders along with key influential people and those that have been successful in overcoming the status quo.
• For technical expertise – Share experiences, marketing knowledge, and help with grant writing.
  o Level: Should have a statewide and national focus.
  o Players: Those with expertise and practical knowledge connecting with those needing this help.
• Funding network to provide sources of funding and help in applying for loans and grants.
  o Level: Local and State
  o Players: Include bankers, investment counselors, business angels. (1 vote)
• Referral network for technical assistance. Referral of businesses in need of technical or business assistance (nascent start-up, existing, growth, troubled).
  o Level: Local
  o Players: Members include all small business/economic development stakeholder groups. (2 votes)
• Referral network for financial. Referral of businesses seeking financing (start-up or existing).
  o Level: Local
  o Players: Members include financial institutions and technical assistance providers (SBDCs, community colleges, etc.) (2 votes)
• Network of leadership programs operating in the state to share curriculum, program ideas, speakers’ bureau, legislative influence. (1 vote)
• Rural community colleges network to share common interests/concerns regarding funding, support, etc.
• Network of local/regional economic development leaders or those who are interested
  o Level: Local and Regional
  o Players: Includes elected/appointed officials, business owners, chambers of commerce to share resources, lobby for funding, etc.
• Mentoring network whose purpose is to connect new entrepreneurs in areas of business interest.
  o Level: Local, State, and National
  o Players: Members include entrepreneurs, business professionals, consultants, and agency personnel. (3 votes)
• Regional network to address I-30/I-35 corridor issues. Inform community leaders () of issues that impact them in short term and long term issues.
  o Level: Regional
  o Players: Mayors, City Managers, Councils of Government, and RC&D Councils
• Information/resource network operating at the state level to share information on resources and opportunities for training.
  o Level: State
  o Players: Members include agencies and education.
• Elementary education network – a statewide network that would act as a resource for educational materials that teachers could use to teach entrepreneurship. (3 votes)
• Community education network that would provide resource materials to educate communities about how to be “community friendly” to entrepreneurs.
  o Level: State
  o Players: Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Groups
• South Texas Network of Businesses in communities to help towns discover and embrace their culture in order to create a diverse “patchwork” of options for people to visit (as opposed to the “cookie cutter” comments all modeled after the same town). This should be a large to small structure where representatives meet across the South Texas region and then bring back information to the smaller community units.
  o Level: South Texas Region
• Network for small cities – Small cities would participate to share how they developed their city’s economy and how they took advantage of their uniqueness. Network should share ideas, best practices (practical ideas).
  o Level: State
  o Players: All Small Cities (2 votes)
• An alliance consisting of liaisons from the business community as well as other key individuals from the community to meet with potential entrepreneurs that could serve as a mentoring group.
  o Level: This would happen at the local community level and could be facilitated as necessary.
  o Players: Business Community
• Business network – Once a business is established, then they could be part of an ongoing support network. This would allow the mentoring to continue as the business evolves.
  o Level: Local level should meet quarterly or as needed.
  o Players: Ideally this group would include a local chamber, business leaders, and key community leaders.
• Entrepreneur network to provide mutual support and resources. Purpose is to provide advice, provide talent, funding, act as alternative board for enterprises on an ad hoc basis as needed and in a time sensitive fashion. Network can be facilitated but have low overhead.
  o Level: State
  o Players: Members include entrepreneurs (new and experienced), all businesses. (4 votes)
• Network for lenders – Alliance to share information about how lenders guide small business owners on how to identify trouble early and what resources are available for lenders to refer to borrowers.
  o Level: State
  o Players: Small Business Lenders
• TCRE statewide entrepreneurship network to support rural business and economic development. This group should provide value-added support to local entrepreneurship networks and wide public-private collaborations.
  o Level: State
  o Small Businesses, Business Service Providers. (2 votes)
• Local rural entrepreneurship networks focused on entrepreneurs and economic development issues for public-private collaborations.
• Texas Community Development Network – a group focused on adding value to local community development networks to develop and implement community based plans (2 votes)
• A local network that includes entrepreneurs, philanthropic folds, community and agency representatives and local real estate owners (buildings) as well as “access experts”
• State clearinghouse (similar taxing provisions) for information and examples.
  o Level: State
  o Players: Members include federal, state, and NGO organizations.
• Community based organizations for a more effective dissemination of information). Operates on a local level for “one-stop shopping for information.
  o Level: Local
  o Players: Members include local assistance programs and agencies. (2 votes)
• Operate somewhat in a regional level (because Texas is too big to be active on a state-wide level) but should be organized within the “region” around community “types” and/or locations.
  o Level: Regional within state
  o Players: Includes people from state and local agencies/organizations as well as entrepreneurs, “funders”, and economic development people.
• Response team focused around supporting entrepreneurial activity. This network must be linked to regional/state/national networks.
  o Level: Local
  o Players: Involves leaders, organizations, and agencies appropriate to area (schools, chambers, economic development corporations, government, and Extension). (3 votes)
• Network of resource providers policy makers that can contribute to entrepreneurial development to local/national networks.
  o Level: State, but must be linked to local/national networks
  o Players: Extension, SBDCs, COGs, legislatures, departments of economic development, NRCS RC&D, etc.
• National network of resource providers and policy makers that can contribute to entrepreneurial development (USDA, DOC, etc.). This network must be linked to regional/state/local network. (2 votes)

Policies
• Use TLM or TRLP to train rural elected/unofficial/emerging leaders in entrepreneurship/economic development/community development efforts and laws (3 votes)
  o Level: State and Local
  o Players: Texas Rural Leadership Program, Texas Municipal League, All county leaders
• Support TCRE funding, expansion, marketing (2 votes)
  o Level: State
  o Players: Texas legislators, Entrepreneurs who access TCRE
• Reduction/lessening of state and local requirements for start-up businesses (building fees, zoning, etc.) (1 vote)
• Level: State and Local
  • Players: City and economic development leaders, entrepreneurs, leaders, access experts
• Environmental compliance applied equally among urban and rural communities
  • Level: State and Local
  • Players: Environmental Compliance agencies, state and local elected officials
• Loan guarantees for start-up businesses (fulfilling required conditions) to enable access to funding (1 vote)
  • Level: Federal and State
  • Players: State and federal elected officials, economic development representation, entrepreneurial access experts
• Change the state guidelines that direct how 4A economic development organizations can spend their funds to allow more support to entrepreneurial companies (2 votes)
  • Level: State
• Correct use of 4A – 4A economic development/community development laws. Clarification of county support of county support of economic development/community development groups. Can counties fund economic development/community development? (4 votes)
  • Level: State and Local
  • Players: County officials, Texas Attorney General’s office, IC2 could research current use/misuse of funds
• Proper use of 4A/4B sales tax for economic development (1 vote)
  • Level: State and Local
  • Players: Elected officials, enforcement agencies
• Provide funds to entrepreneurial businesses that can’t be funded by traditional bank loans (1 vote)
  • Level: State
• An ordinance from local government showing support of entrepreneurial efforts (1 vote)
  • Level: Local
  • Players: City leaders
• Construction and licensure policies; “One Stop Shopping” from government (1 vote)
  • Level: Local and State
  • Players: Zoning boards, state licensing officials, county and city commission members
• 21st century rural homestead/business-stead act
  • Level: Federal with State and Local input
  • Players: Elected officials, USDA, communities
• Educational programs on entrepreneurship and business development instruction (2 votes)
  • Level: State and Local
  • Players: School districts, parents, community colleges, and local offices
• Streamlined business development processes
  • Level: Local
  • Players: Elected officials, city/county staff, business community, community organizations
• Tax abatements – give local businesses, especially new businesses, a tax abatement on sales tax allowing them to build an inventory without penalty
- **Level:** Local
  - **Players:** Business owners, interested business owners, community leaders

- **Educational Policy** – we can’t be an entrepreneurial success unless we’re smart (know how to think) and love to learn (1 vote)
  - **Level:** Federal, State, and Local
  - **Players:** Educators (whole range), entrepreneurs, business/industry, policymakers, students

- **Policies supporting fiscal reward for entrepreneurial activity** (e.g., redefine sales tax). Policies supporting development and delivery of educational programs supporting entrepreneurship. Funding of TCRE. (2 votes)

- **Local ordinances/regulations**
  - **Level:** Local

- **State policies impacting resources** – education – financing – 4A/4B taxes
  - **Level:** State

- **Better zoning policies in place before growth happens to protect community infrastructure.** This would help community fell comfortable with change and be able to welcome new businesses that do not have excess cash. (1 vote)
  - **Level:** Local
  - **Players:** Government officials, school officials, natural resource officials, engineers and consultants

- **Texas Entrepreneurship Network or some comparable statewide network** sanctioned at the state level
  - **Level:** State focus with local implementation strategies
  - **Players:** Politicians, business community, workforce, economic development, education community at all levels

- **Everything that can be done to create local business development environment including infrastructure development, taxes, zoning, etc.** (1 vote)
  - **Level:** Local
  - **Players:** Elected officials, agencies, education, businesses

- **Policies that allow 4A/4B enough flexibility in small, rural communities** (3 votes)
  - **Level:** Local
  - **Players:** Small businesses, local officials, community leaders

- **Measure return on investment** – supporting entrepreneurs requires investments compared to the cost of either (1) inactivity or (2) chasing the big deal (i.e., recruitment). Make economic implications of policy choices clear. Measure and publish (1) business establishments and closures; (2) jobs created and lost; (3) local investment; (4) tax revenue; and (5) outmigration of youth (by TAKS score/GIA) (2 votes)

- **Local ordinances should mesh with business community plan**

- **Small business support** in terms of cost-share programs, grants, loan programs, etc., that enhance ability to start and sustain small businesses. (5 votes)
  - **Level:** State and Local
  - **Players:** Elected officials, agencies, private foundations, non-profits
What can the SRDC do?

- **Working With Other Entities**
  - Partner with national rural organizations to get the info out to other groups for their benefit
  - Serve as conduit of information between states and national (federal)
  - Provide venue for sharing resources and develop support for regional efforts that benefit state collaborations
  - Provide Texas CRDC with the most recent and timely information
  - Lend support to economic development corporations trying to assist entrepreneurs (today’s workshop is an excellent example)
  - Support development of Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship tools as demonstration projects that can be replicated throughout the region
  - Promote technical assistance programs such as the SBDC, Extension Services, etc.
  - Develop a Q&A for entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs that service providers, funders, and government agencies would also be able to access and/or automatically receive
  - Meet with local officials in small towns that are in danger of dying but are interested in surviving
  - Stay abreast of legislation that affects rural entrepreneurship
  - Help with legislation on the state level and what other states may be doing that is working. List benefits as a result.
  - Develop a marketing campaign aimed at local, state, and national elected officials

- **Communicate Information**
  - Offer more workshops like the one sponsored today
  - More trainings and listening sessions like this one
  - Publish to the group consolidated findings from listening sessions
  - Sponsor regional entrepreneurship summit annually
  - Disburse more information and success stories on entrepreneurial efforts
  - Increase awareness of programs and benefits offered
  - Share successes of other states and innovative funding of programs
  - Share best practices with other communities about successful entrepreneurs in rural Texas
  - Help with looking outside the box with what can be done that local people would never have thought of
  - Create a forum for communication and sharing of ideas that is web-based
    - Web logo (blog)
    - Listserv
    - Interactive web page
    - Etc.
  - Bring in what is working on a regional level and help on a local level
  - Share entrepreneurship training programs and resources
  - Connect resources between states

- **Network/Product Development**
  - Cost/benefit analysis of E.D.C. programs
  - Develop and support entrepreneurship practitioner support group
• Help build viable networks of access information
• Form, promote, and support regional and national networks for entrepreneurship
• Facilitate and implement formation of Extension centered networks for entrepreneurship at state and county levels
• Develop financing directory
• Development tax abatement reference guide
• Support borrowers in preparing to own, manage, and grow a business before they get started

• Education/Research
  o Integrate research and Extension efforts directed at entrepreneurship
  o Do a study of what types of economic development things **do not** work in small towns (industrial parks)
  o Develop a catalog of rural assets – historical, industrial, resources, workforce, etc. – what are the competitive advantages? How can they be exploited/promoted?
  o Develop a catalog of rural liabilities – what are the barriers to development? How can they be overcome?
  o Help develop youth entrepreneurial curriculum and promote it with state agencies and organizations
  o Develop educational materials for teaching entrepreneurship in elementary schools
  o Help with rural entrepreneurship curriculum for modules for classes – continuing education, college, and community training
  o Develop educational materials that can be used by community leaders to develop support for entrepreneurship in the community
  o Rural entrepreneurship curricula for policy makers to teach them how to promote rural entrepreneurship
  o Training and support at the local level
  o Case studies of entrepreneurial communities
  o Clarify: Is the SRDC about self-employment/small business or entrepreneurship? These are not the same things.

What can the Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship do?
• Community Awareness and Involvement
  o Publicize who you are and what you can do for rural communities – may have to go in person to address community leaders. E-mail is sometimes ignored.
  o Meet and work with local officials in small towns that are in danger of “dying” out yet are interested in surviving
  o More meetings involving more people (last one was by invitation, only 60) to get more ideas generating
  o Pursue a marketing plan that will assist staff in delivering the word out to community developers
  o Continue to pursue statewide establishments
  o Promote state agencies and organizations (TDA, ORCA, TCD, TCE) to focus on entrepreneurship


- Focus on developing relationships to bring their product to the grass roots organizations
- Take this information back to local community leaders. Tell them contacts for upcoming RC&D community resource team support meeting in Edna.
- Would like representation to come to these RC&D community resource team meetings to give options on what can be done to help these communities
- Continue to work to increase collaboration
- Continue to develop and improve relationships with cooperating partnerships

**Communication**

- Create a forum for communication and sharing of ideas that is web-based
  - Web logo (blog)
  - Listserv
  - Interactive web page
  - Etc.
- Website is a good start
- Share more success stories of communities embracing entrepreneurial efforts and of unsuccessful entrepreneurial businesses

**Education/Research**

- Training and support at the local level
- Assist in developing a state-wide entrepreneurship training network
- Link up with additional educational resources (University of Houston-Victoria)
- Case studies of entrepreneurial communities – communities that spawn businesses. How do they do it? What policies? What obstacles?
- Workshops on the following:
  - Financing
  - Abatements
  - Business marketing
  - Licensing requirements
- Work with state agencies (TEA) and organizations (TCTA) and local schools to nurture youth entrepreneurship on training teachers how to develop and work with entrepreneurial minds and spirits
- Develop entrepreneurial curriculum for junior high and high school
- Greg – help Coastal Bend College develop entrepreneurship program curriculum for Perkins Grant
- Develop a catalog of rural assets – historical, industrial, resources, workforce, etc. – what are the competitive advantages? How can they be exportedformatted?
- Develop a catalog of rural liabilities – what are the barriers to development? How can they be overcome?

**Technical Assistance**

- Promote technical assistance programs such as the SBDC, Texas Cooperative Extension, etc.
- Identify and disburse more ideas for would-be entrepreneurs to start in rural communities
- Many farmers are being forced to sell land. They are multi-skilled being mechanics, welders, planners, etc. Perhaps have a workshop for
farmers/producers to assist them in making a change to a way of life that can be entrepreneurial by using the skills they possess

- **Networking/Partnerships**
  - Get funded
  - Continue to educate 4A/4B organizations about TCRE and its objectives
  - Provide information to 4A/4B organizations to help us provide political support so you receive funds to support your efforts
  - Establish local entrepreneurship networks
  - Network with these communities that did things that work and where it didn’t
  - Help develop networks and introduce communities to what groups are already available
  - Partner with IC2 on next round of NSF Partnership for Innovation Grant (Spring 2006)

What do you plan to do when you get back home?

- **Respondent 1**
  - Register at TCRE
  - Consider listing success stories on the Internet
  - Contact Comptrollers Office about 4A and 4B corporations

- **Respondent 2**
  - Follow-up with contacts made at meeting
  - Follow-up on Texas Rural Entrepreneurial Network

- **Respondent 3**
  - Share the info and summary of today’s meeting with my boss
  - Share info with local partners such as EDCs, Chambers of Commerce
  - Touch base with people/contacts from today

- **Respondent 4**
  - Write some columns on rural entrepreneurship
  - Follow-up with some contacts made

- **Respondent 5**
  - Will take what I’ve learned to my local communities – where I live and where I work – and help them with contacts so when they are ready to organize a group they will know who to contact.
  - I enjoyed your presentation and enjoyed knowing that someone is working or interested in the problems rural communities are facing and trying to help.

- **Respondent 6**
  - Try to build an “entrepreneurial support section” into our ED Board orientation to get our Board members on board in supporting entrepreneurship efforts
  - Check out SRDC and TCRE websites to gather more information regarding entrepreneurial support
  - Encourage more entrepreneurial efforts in local education entities to nurture youth entrepreneurship

- **Respondent 7**
  - Study TCRE website for loan info
- Talk to my ED board to consider more local support for entrepreneurship programs
- Talk to local school superintendents to encourage entrepreneurship training in elementary schools

- **Respondent 8**
  - Register with TCRE website as a resource
  - Include information on TCRE in local workshops for small businesses
  - Develop an entrepreneurship page for our website

- **Respondent 9**
  - Implement community leadership programs across the state