Reflections on Coaching
Entrepreneurial Communities

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Entrepreneurship

• Economic development strategy
• Empowerment strategy
• Entrepreneurship vs. Small Business
Rhetoric vs. Action in Entrepreneurship

• Everyone loves entrepreneurship
• Agencies don’t offer much funding
  – Slow and sure vs. fast and uncertain
Is Gov’t Money the Solution to Getting More Entrepreneurs?

• Evidence is mixed
  – Revolving loan funds of 1990s
  – SBDC program
  – SBIR program
Is Foundation Money the Solution to Getting More Entrepreneurs?

• Evidence is mixed
  – Episodic funding as foundation priorities change
  – One size fits all niche funding approaches
    • Kauffman → focus on “start-ups”
    • Edward Lowe → focus on “second stage”
    • Sirolli → hire a “slave” for local businesses
    • Richard Florida → attract ”creative class”
What About Communities?

• Some evidence that “cultural capital” plays a role in entrepreneurship

• Entrepreneurs at all business sizes in community...biz needs depend on stage
  – This is a drawback of ideological approaches
If there’s no money and if it anyway doesn’t work very well, what to do?

• Work towards expanding cultural capital that supports entrepreneurship
  • School-based experiences/curriculum design
  • Network development
  • Policy assessment
  • Celebration of successes
  • Work across spectrum of businesses
  • Focus on businesses that are growth-oriented
  • Encourage people to think about careers as entrepreneurs
Creating Entrepreneurial Communities Program

• Core elements
  – Community application process
  – Cross-disciplinary
  – Quasi-volunteer driven
  – No “recipe” of steps → based on local priorities

• Four hallmarks
  – Social networking
  – Resources for entrepreneurs
  – Entrepreneurial culture
  – Policies
Coaching Concept

• Not a trainer

• Coach
  – Listen, assess, suggest

• Different from strategic planning because the coach stays with the communities for over a year, not a session or two

CEC Program Meet-up
Creating Entrepreneurial Communities
Lessons from Phase I

• Phase I Staffing plan
  – Coordinator/program designer
  – Uber-coach
  – Coaches drawn from Extension Community Development field staff, with several assignments based on geography

• Multi-county communities did not function well

• Coaching was uneven
  – “Full plate” among Educators
  – Distance played a role
    • Where Extension person was close, line between coach and team member became blurry
    • Where Extension person was far, interactions were limited
Creating Entrepreneurial Communities

Phase II

• Phase II redesign to address weak points of Phase I
• USDA/AFRI Integrated Research & Extension Grant
  – Full time coach for all communities
    • Mix of travel to community, all-community meetings, phone, web, and email for coaching
  – Mixed methods for research
    • Qualitative observation of coach interactions
    • Quantitative estimate of factors associated with program demand
Phase II Timeline

- April 2010 Coach identified
  - Participant from Phase I, so familiar with basics of program
- July 2010 community applications due
- August 2010 communities notified
- Fall 2010 – “Boot camp” face-to-face meeting
- Winter 2011 – “Virtual meet-up”
  - Lesson: all-virtual, not travel to be virtual
- Rest of 2011, more virtual interactions and site visits
- Data collection throughout, closing interviews Jan-April 2012
- Transcription, coding, and analysis still underway
Team Status

- Eight communities accepted into the program
  - As with Phase I, mostly rural or outer-ring suburban
  - Six remained with the program during the entire research period
  - One team dropped out after the mixed virtual meet-up
  - One team “graduated” in that they rapidly moved beyond needing coaching services; they saw a benefit from the program and restructured their team based on coaching input
Team Goals

Number of goals (ongoing, partial or adopted) per team

- Team 1
- Team 2
- Team 3
- Team 4
- Team 5
- Team 6
- Team 7
- Team 8
Example Goals

• Branding the community as “entrepreneur friendly”
• Social media approaches to entrepreneur network development
• Mentorship programs
• Monthly entrepreneur meet-up (only goal common across all eight teams)

Fast pitch session at a meet-up
Start NOW!

Want to Start a Business or Strengthen your Business
It's as easy as 1 - 2 - 3
Visit "The Biz" and get going now (located on the 2nd floor of your Local Public Library)

Example Goal: Business Resources

Step 1
At your local library there is a section called "THE BIZ". Here you will find a computer, log on as a guest and go to...

michiganadvantage.org
/quick links
/Michigan get your business online
/(tab) Entrepreneurs & Innovators
/business start up resources
/view guide to starting a small business (mid of page)

michigan.gov/business
/Resource Center
/write a business plan
/sample outline for Business Plan

Step 2
Call the Barry County Chamber of Commerce and ask for a SCORE Counselor. They will assist you in FREE Business Counseling. It's time to get your business on the road.

CALL TODAY 269-945-2454

Step 3
Browse through the books in "The Biz" to start your creative juices flowing.

Be your own BOSS
Start your own BIZ
Mapping Team Goals to Program Hallmarks

- Resources: 46%
- Culture: 32%
- Social Network: 20%
- Policy: 2%
Current Status

• Grant support of coach came to its scheduled closing date; one Extension field staff member reassigned to coach six communities that wished to continue being coached.

• Teams beginning to see impacts of their work.

• MSU Extension will evaluate whether to continue the program at the end of 2012.
Reflections

• New coach’s orientation period somewhat longer than expected—knew program elements but needed time to develop group facilitation & technology skills
  – Consideration for future hiring and orientation

• “Policy” hallmark may need more attention in any future iterations of the program, or it could be dropped as a hallmark.

• Overall demand for program insufficient for permanent full time coach serving one 10M person state – potential for multi-state collaboration or part-time role