

# **An Evaluation of the Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Institute: Insights and Recommendations**

**Final Report  
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## **Dedication**

This final report is dedicated to Ted Bradshaw, a member of the evaluation team who passed away in August 2006, before this evaluation was completed. Ted's enthusiasm for this evaluation project and his insightful contributions to both the project design and the lessons learned from this evaluation are deeply appreciated by his colleagues on the evaluation team. Ted was a valued colleague, a generous friend and an avid listener and confidant for the KECI fellows who were privileged to interact with him. Through this dedication, we acknowledge his commitment to community development and his passion for the work of economic development practitioners in rural Kentucky and across the country. He is missed and all those who knew him benefited from his scholarship and his wonderfully sharp and timely wit.

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## **Executive Summary**

Established in 2003 by the University of Kentucky with funding from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board, the goal of the Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Institute is to develop a cadre of trained volunteer leaders within the northeastern Kentucky region who become part of the region's entrepreneurial support infrastructure. Program objectives that guided the design and implementation of the training curriculum include:

- **Community leaders will develop the skills required to be effective coaches for entrepreneurs.**
- **A support network of entrepreneurial fellows in the region will develop out of the institute.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will form alliances with existing support providers in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will promote entrepreneurship within the broader community.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will develop and maintain relationships with entrepreneurs in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will build a strong entrepreneurial support structure and entrepreneurial culture that stimulate entrepreneurs to start new businesses and expand existing businesses in the region.**

An external evaluation team developed a multi-layered evaluation framework for the KECI including participation in seminars, daily seminar session evaluations, journaling by the coaching fellows, in-person and group interviews, and records of coaching and community activities. This evaluation framework differs from other evaluations typically used in programs like this in that it is an ongoing evaluation that looks at the process as well as the outcomes and evaluation input allowed refinement of the evaluation instruments and data collection. Each component of the evaluation framework provided some insight into the success of the program in meeting its objectives.

While definitive evaluation of the impact of KECI fellows will come at the end of their commitment to the program, the external evaluation team has concluded that the program is off to an impressive start. The training is excellent and the fellows are well-prepared to be effective coaches and entrepreneurial leaders in the region. A very impressive network of fellows is emerging with a strong sense of mission and mutual support. Alliances with other resource providers are being created, although it will take time to establish the role of the fellows in the entrepreneurial support system. Many exciting community projects are underway or have been completed with the mini-grant programs. These projects should have an impact on expanding the knowledge and support for

entrepreneurship at the local level. Finally, fellows are engaging entrepreneurs in the vital work of building and expanding businesses.

There was no expectation that the major quantitative benefits of the training would be recorded while the training was ongoing, but the results are impressive concerning the fellows' ability to apply their training for immediate benefit in developing an entrepreneurial culture in Kentucky. The quantitative assessment of their accomplishments suggests that the fellows were actively involved in building their own skills and, in turn, using them to create a culture of entrepreneurship in Eastern Kentucky. Data collected at graduation for each class (November 2005 for Class I and November 2006 for Class II) show that the fellows had contact with over 1300 entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs, providing information about the coaching process and helping to increase awareness of the benefit of entrepreneurship in Kentucky. The fellows actually recruited and entered into a coaching relationship with 161 entrepreneurs in the region. This outreach was significant given the fact that fellows were still in training and they had to build their networks to identify entrepreneurs that might be candidates for coaching.

This is a significant contribution to entrepreneurship development in Kentucky when put in context. Up to this point, resources for entrepreneurs in the region involved an extensive network of small business offices and innovation centers, as well as other programs, but there was no resource to help entrepreneurs integrate their use of the various services. The KECI program, in two years, reached 161 entrepreneurs who engaged in a process to develop new business skills and capacity. The capacity of the fellows to continue developing additional coaching contacts is of course unknown, but there is very strong evidence that the program has achieved its goal of proving that coaching resources can be made available effectively to entrepreneurs and that entrepreneurs will use the coaching services when appropriate.

In addition, the fellows developed significant partnerships with other service providers in the region, referring a total of 136 entrepreneurs to service providers and having 36 entrepreneurs referred to them. These service providers became partners because the KCEI fellows were out in the community making presentations and becoming known as a resource for these service providers, rather than competitors. The number of presentations is impressive: the fellows made 665 informal presentations and 131 formal presentations in their communities. The large number of these contacts took entrepreneurship from a hidden topic and made it a visible and frequently discussed topic in Eastern Kentucky.

A unique feature of the training curriculum was the study tour of Scotland. A key goal was to learn from the entrepreneurial successes in Scotland and apply

some of the “lessons learned” to strengthen policy, youth programs, and global connections among businesses in northeastern Kentucky. The overall evaluation of the fellows was that the tour was valuable, best described as a “chance in a lifetime”. If there was one overwhelming conclusion from the evaluations of the Scotland trip, it is that the fellows saw that people in an even more rural and isolated environment were succeeding through entrepreneurship, and that this inspired them to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities even more vigorously when they returned home.

Several recommendations for program improvement were identified by the evaluation team after considerable discussion with the fellows:

- The fellows’ leadership and coaching skills saw dramatic improvement over the KECI program. However, two areas for improvement were identified. The SuperCoaching™ seminars were identified as most valuable to the fellows but extremely intense and even overwhelming. Restructuring the seminars to provide maximum benefit to the fellows, such as by splitting the material across two seminars, separated by time to apply what they have learned in their communities, might improve this aspect of KECI. The fellows’ also expressed a need for more training and preparation for the mini-grant proposal process.
- In addition to training a group of community leaders, KECI is also developing a regional network of fellows who can support and complement one another as they work with entrepreneurs and communities in the region. To encourage the development of this network across classes, the project team should consider incorporating fellows from previous classes as coaching resource partners to new fellows. Such partnering, particularly in terms of coaching skills, would provide novice coaches with a sounding board as they work to apply what they have learned in the seminars.
- While the KECI selection process resulted in two classes of energetic and committed individuals, a small number of coaches did not fulfill their commitment for a number of reasons. One recommendation to augment the current selection process is to include a more detailed consideration of the background and commitment of candidates in fulfilling the goals and requirements of this project and to assess each candidate’s willingness to become “team players”.
- The long-term impact of KECI on the northeast Kentucky region will depend to a large extent on continued efforts by the fellows to use their coaching skills to support entrepreneurs and to use their leadership skills to promote an entrepreneurial culture. As the fellows graduate and begin their work in the region, they will likely need community-level, “hands-on” support, both technical and personal. Building the capacity of the KECI project team to provide ongoing support may be essential to the long-term success of the program. One way of building this capacity would be

to establish a new project position, a circuit-rider who provides technical and personal support to fellows as they expand their entrepreneurial coaching and their work on community projects.

- To assess the longer term impact of the program in the region, follow up evaluation with Classes I and II will be important. This evaluation would involve continued data collection from the fellows regarding their coaching and community activities, and would enable the evaluation team to conduct community focus groups to assess how the program has contributed to the creation of an entrepreneurial culture in the region.

KECI is one of the more demanding leadership programs in the country. The program was designed to insure accountability on the part of participants through the assignment of homework, the commitment to design and complete community projects in the region, and rigorous requirements for graduation. Participants took seriously the investment of state money in the development of their leadership and coaching skills and were committed to giving back to their region.

KECI is an innovative and flexible program that is developing both leaders and coaches (often in the same individual) and it may well prove to be a national model for other rural places. Based on our findings that program effectiveness and operations are excellent, the next logical step for this "best in class" leadership program would be to extend KECI to other regions in the state.

## **Section I – About This Report**

The Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Institute (KECI) was established in 2003 by the University of Kentucky with funding from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board. The KECI recruits and trains volunteer leaders from a 19-county region in northeastern Kentucky in leadership and entrepreneurial coaching. The volunteer leaders, now called coaches or fellows, apply these skills in coaching entrepreneurs who wish to start or expand a business. Furthermore, the fellows also work on community projects that increase the knowledge of, and support for, entrepreneurship.

This report is the final evaluation report for the first two classes of fellows. Class I began their training in September 2004 and completed training in November 2005, while Class II started in September 2005 and completed training in November 2006. At the time of this report, the fellows still have a remaining service commitment, but have “graduated” from the training portion of the program. The evaluation examines the effectiveness and impact of the program on the fellows, the participating entrepreneurs and communities. In particular, the evaluation team was asked to assess progress toward the following program objectives:

- **Community leaders will develop the skills required to be effective coaches for entrepreneurs.**
- **A support network of entrepreneurial fellows in the region will develop out of the institute.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will form alliances with existing support providers in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will promote entrepreneurship within the broader community.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will develop and maintain relationships with entrepreneurs in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will build a strong entrepreneurial support structure and entrepreneurial culture that stimulate entrepreneurs to start new businesses and expand existing businesses in the region.**

As well as considering effectiveness and outcomes, the evaluation considers the process through which the institute selects and trains fellows and supports their endeavors. The evaluation provides recommendations for program enhancement with the intent of contributing to the evolution and continuous improvement of the program.

The evaluation team consists of four individuals who are not affiliated with the program, the University of Kentucky, or the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board and can therefore serve as outside, neutral observers. Each individual on

*March 12, 2007*

the evaluation team has extensive experience in entrepreneurship, leadership, and/or community and economic development (see Appendix F).

## **Section II – About the Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Institute**

Kentucky took a distinctive approach to the problem of assisting tobacco farmers who would suffer economically as the tobacco quotas were eliminated. They strategically set aside a portion of the funds from the Master Tobacco Settlement to help communities in tobacco-dependent regions adjust to changes in the tobacco sector and encourage agricultural diversification. The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board was created in 2000 with a mission to invest in “innovative proposals that increase net farm income and effect tobacco farmers, tobacco-impacted communities and agriculture across the state by stimulating markets for Kentucky agricultural products, finding new ways to add value to Kentucky agricultural products, and exploring new opportunities for Kentucky farms” (<http://agpolicy.ky.gov/board/index.shtml>). One of the projects supported by the Board was a research study into the state of entrepreneurship in northeastern Kentucky – a 19-county region that includes the most tobacco-dependent counties in the state (Scorsone, Werner, Powers and Somov, December 2003).

Through analysis of secondary data and information collected in regional focus groups, the research team provided an overview of the region’s economic development prospects. What the team discovered was a region challenged by changes in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors of the economy. Traditional manufacturing jobs were being lost at a rate greater than both state and national averages at the same time that tobacco quotas and revenues were declining. The decline in two of the more important sectors in the regional economy created a sense of urgency about identifying and implementing new economic development strategies within the region. Entrepreneurship development was identified as an important catalyst for such a strategy.

The research team went on to identify elements of an entrepreneurial leader development strategy including: entrepreneurial facilitation, technical assistance, financial capital availability and market access. They concluded that Kentucky in general and this region in particular were missing one critical piece of the entrepreneurial support infrastructure related to entrepreneurial facilitation or coaching. As a result, the research team proposed the creation of the Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Institute (KECI) to recruit and train volunteer leaders to become coaches and facilitators of entrepreneurial development in the northeastern Kentucky region. In 2003, the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board provided the resources to create KECI and train the first two classes of fellows in the region.

The concept behind the KECI is that volunteers with a strong connection and commitment to a region can be trained to be coaches for entrepreneurs, both potential and existing, in their communities. A KECI Entrepreneurial Coach is a

volunteer citizen leader who acquires skills through learning and application to facilitate entrepreneurial behaviors and linkages to help foster new economic activity in a county or region. The coach's role in working with entrepreneurs is very specific – he is not a service provider in the traditional sense of providing financial, marketing or other types of business assistance. Rather she is a good listener and asks probing questions of the would-be entrepreneur. She provides guidance and encouragement to the entrepreneur while at the same time being certain that the entrepreneur is doing the hard work of starting (or discovering whether to start) a business.

The goal of the KECI is to develop a cadre of trained volunteer leaders within the northeastern Kentucky region who become part of the region's entrepreneurial support infrastructure. Underlying the project are a number of objectives that guided the KECI project team<sup>1</sup> in the design and implementation of the training curriculum:

- **Community leaders will develop the skills required to be effective coaches for entrepreneurs.**
- **A support network of entrepreneurial fellows in the region will develop out of the institute.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will form alliances with existing support providers in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will promote entrepreneurship within the broader community.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will develop and maintain relationships with entrepreneurs in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will build a strong entrepreneurial support structure and entrepreneurial culture that stimulate entrepreneurs to start new businesses and expand existing businesses in the region.**

The project's success in accomplishing these objectives is the subject of the evaluation being undertaken by the evaluation team.

The KECI is structured as a 15-month program for classes of 30 community leaders from the northeastern Kentucky region. Each fellow selected for the program receives a fellowship covering the costs of a series of nine seminars (2-3 day sessions). Eight seminars are held within the region and one seminar provides an opportunity for international travel to learn about entrepreneurship development in a different cultural setting. Each fellow commits to spending at least 50 hours a year following completion of the seminar training for two years

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<sup>1</sup> The project team is Dr. Ronald J. Hustedde, Director, Dr. Larry Jones, Co-Director, and Tammy Werner, Coordinator, the University of Kentucky.

working with entrepreneurs or communities in their part of the region and to participating in alumni events organized by the university.

In the first year of the program, the curriculum was organized into the following seminars:

- Seminar 1 (September 2004) – The Promise of Entrepreneurship
- Seminar 2 (October 2004) – The Promise of Entrepreneurship in Practice (field trip to Ohio-based Appalachian Center for Economic Networks)
- Seminars 3 and 4 (November 2004) – Supercoaching™ the Entrepreneur
- Seminar 5 (January 2005) – Building Entrepreneurial Capacity
- Seminar 6 (February 2005) – New Markets and Mini-Grant Development
- Seminar 7 (May 2005) – Policy Conference and Mini-Grant Presentations/Awards
- Seminar 8 (September 2005) – Entrepreneurship in Rural Scotland
- Seminar 9 (November 2005) – Mini-grant Presentations and Graduation

Based on input received from the Class I coaching fellows, the curriculum for the second class in the program was modified in terms of the sequencing of topics as well as some changes to content. Specifically, the seminars on how to coach (i.e., the Supercoaching™ seminars) occurred earlier in the program for the Class II fellows to help the fellows discover early on what coaching is all about. The seminars for Class II were:

- Seminar 1 (September 2005) – The Promise of Entrepreneurship
- Seminar 2 (October 2005) – Supercoaching™ the Entrepreneur
- Seminar 3 and 4 (November 2005) – Building Entrepreneurial Capacity
- Seminar 5 (February 2006) – Exploring Entrepreneurial Communities (field trip to Appalachian Center for Economic Networks)
- Seminar 6 (March 2006) – Building Entrepreneurial Communities in Kentucky (mini-grant development)
- Seminar 7 (April 2006) – Entrepreneurship Policy and Mini-Grant Projects
- Seminar 8 (September 2006) – Entrepreneurship in Rural Scotland
- Seminar 9 (November 2006) – Mini-grant Presentations and Graduation

### **Section III – Evaluation Framework and Approach**

The evaluation team developed a multi-layered evaluation framework for the KECI including:

- Participation in seminars and travel
- Daily seminar session evaluations
- Journaling by the coaching fellows
- In-person and group interviews with coaching fellows
- Fellows' records of coaching and community activities

This evaluation framework differs from other evaluations typically used in programs like this in two ways. First, it is an ongoing evaluation that looks at the process as well as the outcomes. The relatively large evaluation team of four experts in leadership development, entrepreneurship and rural development was able to work with the KECI leadership to continuously brainstorm how to incorporate feedback from the evaluation into the ongoing design of the program, and to utilize this feedback to shape the program for the second class of fellows. Moreover, the ongoing evaluation input allowed refinement of the evaluation instruments and data collection.

Each component of the evaluation framework has provided some insight into the success of the program in meeting its objectives and a means of describing the outcomes of the program. The individual components of the evaluation are discussed below.

#### **Participation in seminars and travel**

Members of the evaluation team participated in four seminars during the first year of the project (the introductory seminar, the Supercoaching™ seminar, the policy/mini grant seminar, and the international trip to Scotland) and four seminars during the second year of the project (the building entrepreneurial capacity seminar, the mini-grant development seminar, the entrepreneurship policy and mini-grant project seminar, and the international trip to Scotland). The entire team also participated in the final graduation seminars, conducting one-on-one interviews with entrepreneurial fellows and administering an end of class evaluation.

#### **Daily Seminar Session Evaluations**

The end of seminar evaluations were designed to measure, for each day's session, the usefulness of content, the effectiveness of presentation, the most useful part of the session for them as they train to become a coach and community leader, and any changes they would make to the session. These evaluations provided two things. One, the evaluations provided a quantitative measure of how relevant the content of each session was for the fellows and how well the material was communicated to them. Two, they provided feedback

to the project team regarding changes that may be required as the curriculum is revised for future classes.

In addition, a final curriculum evaluation was completed during the graduation seminar for each class. This tool provided an opportunity for the fellows to reflect on the specific skills they had acquired through the entire process of KECI seminars. (Appendix A includes this final evaluation.)

### **Journaling by Coaching Fellows**

The KECI is a leadership program to develop entrepreneurial coaching leaders in the region. As such, the evaluation team felt it was important to capture the “journey” of the fellows – their challenges, struggles and joys along the way. To capture these observations efficiently for Class I, each evaluation team member was assigned a cohort of 8-9 coaching fellows who completed an email journal following the first five seminars. The same questions were posed after each seminar (see Appendix B):

- What are you learning from the seminars that you think will be valuable to you as an Entrepreneurial Coach in your community?
- Have you discovered any opportunities to apply these entrepreneurial coaching strategies in your community? Have you made any plans or taken any specific actions to apply your skills to these opportunities (discuss both the positive and challenging aspects of your experience)?
- Please reflect on your journey to become an Entrepreneurial Coach. What aspects of this process are working well and what are not? How do you feel about your experience – both joys and frustrations?

The evaluation team stopped using the journaling after seminar 5 of Class I because of difficulty getting responses from the coaching fellows. An alternative method of getting information about each fellow’s journey was used during the trip to Scotland and the final seminar – one-on-one interviews with each fellow. For Class II, small group sessions were used in place of journaling during those seminars in which members of the evaluation team participated as well as during the international trip and the final seminar.

### **In-person Interviews**

The evaluation team members met with their coaching cohorts in small groups in November 2004 and May 2005 for Class I and in November 2005, March and April 2006 for Class II to discuss the challenges faced by the fellows, improvements that could be made to the program and the best things about the program. Further one-on-one interviews were conducted during the trips to Scotland and the final graduation seminars (see Appendix C for final seminar interview questions).

### **Fellows' Records of Coaching and Community Activities**

Fellows were asked to maintain records measuring the extent to which the fellows formed alliances with other support providers, promoted entrepreneurship within the community, and developed and maintained relationships with entrepreneurs in their community. The fellows were asked to maintain a record of contacts made over time as a way to map the network created by the fellows. To capture this quantitative information, the evaluators conducted individual interviews, using a data sheet (see Appendix D), during the Scotland trips and the graduation seminars to collect such metrics as the number of entrepreneurs contacted, the number coached, the number of community presentations made, the number of referrals to service providers, etc.

## **Section IV – Selecting the Entrepreneurial Fellows**

The process for selecting entrepreneurial fellows began as early as 2003 during the research project that generated the idea for KECI. The research included focus groups in each of the 19 counties in the target region and meetings with each of the county agricultural development councils. Participants in these meetings included local elected officials, economic development leaders, entrepreneurs and others who had insight on the climate for entrepreneurship in the region. As part of this process, each agricultural development council was asked to take a vote regarding their support for the project and to agree to nominate at least one Fellow for KECI. All 19 councils supported the project and agreed to participate in the nomination process.

The formal recruitment process ran from April to June 2004 for Class I and from April to June 2005 for Class II and was designed by the project team in conjunction with two agricultural communications faculty from the University of Kentucky. The recruitment process for Class I included:

- Distribution of color brochures about the program through local chambers, extension agents and other local organizations.
- Presentations about the program to extension agents, chamber groups and other local organizations.
- Individual recruitment packets sent to state, county and city elected officials and to extension agents, county agricultural development council chairs, economic development leaders and other group leaders.
- Personal recruitment by an extension staff person (and eastern Kentucky native) over a six-month period – included visits with all judge-executives, extension agents, and economic development leaders as well as newspaper articles.
- Public radio announcements and interview with KECI director.
- Workshop on *Revitalizing the Economy of NE Kentucky: Beyond Tobacco Dependency* with keynote speech by Ernesto Sirolli and public announcement about KECI.
- Launch of a website with downloadable nomination materials and program information.
- Personal calls, emails, and letters from KECI director and other team members.

Recruitment for Class II relied heavily on recommendations from the Class I fellows. However, the timing of recruitment and the mini-grant projects overlapped and, as a result, the project team received few referrals from Class I. Most of the Class II applications came from personal contacts with people in the region.

The recruitment process resulted in over 80 nominations and 52 completed applications for Class I. Interviews were conducted with each of the 52 applicants in July 2004. For Class II, there were also 52 completed applications and interviews were conducted during summer 2005. After an orientation to KECI by the project director, each applicant was interviewed for about 30 minutes. Applicants were permitted to bring family members or friends as support for their interview. In considering the applicants, the Agricultural Development Board and the project team were looking for individuals who had the following characteristics:

- Commitment to attend all nine seminars, including the international trip, and to complete all homework assignments between seminars.
- Enthusiasm for learning about rural entrepreneurship.
- Willingness to donate 50 hours per year to the local community or region for two years following graduation.
- Commitment to helping the region move beyond tobacco-dependency and belief that this change can happen.
- Leadership experience in the community.
- Ideally, experience in finance, marketing, product development, education, or leadership of a nonprofit, especially those who have started businesses with or without success in the past.
- Brings a fresh perspective to KECI.
- Ability and willingness to work in teams and with community groups

The selection committee was also asked to choose a class that represented the diversity of the region, specifically in terms of age, gender (evenly divided), race, occupational and educational background and leadership experience. In addition, about half the class should be engaged in agriculture or an ag-related organization to be certain that the issue of tobacco dependency was addressed. Each of the 19 counties was to have at least one fellow, if suitable candidates were found. Using these guidelines, the committee selected 30 fellows for Class I and a waiting list of other candidates. Only one fellow declined to participate due to health reasons and another from the waiting list was added.<sup>2</sup> For Class II, the committee selected 30 fellows. Two fellows decided not to participate after the first seminar and two from the waiting list were added.

The selection process resulted in a committed and relatively diverse group of coaching fellows. The presence of entrepreneurs among the fellows strengthened the class as they brought real world insights to the seminars. The agricultural background of many of the fellows kept agri-entrepreneurship issues on the table throughout the seminars. Several fellows indicated that it was very

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<sup>2</sup> The program began with 30 Class I coaches in September 2004 but two fellows dropped out of the program in February 2005 for health-related reasons. Class II began with 30 coaches in September 2005 and 28 fellows completed the program.

helpful to have another fellow in the county for mutual support and joint efforts. Therefore, for future cohorts of fellows, it might be helpful to try to identify two fellows from each county, if possible, to strengthen support and capacity for the program.

## **Section V – Assessing Outcomes for KECI**

The original intent of the KECI program was to address six broad and interrelated goals and the evaluation strove to put in context the measurable outcomes with the longer term and more subjective purposes of the program. The evaluation addressed each of these goals:

- **Community leaders will develop the skills required to be effective coaches for entrepreneurs.**
- **A support network of entrepreneurial fellows in the region will develop out of the institute.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will form alliances with existing support providers in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will promote entrepreneurship within the broader community.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will develop and maintain relationships with entrepreneurs in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will build a strong entrepreneurial support structure and entrepreneurial culture that stimulate entrepreneurs to start new businesses and expand existing businesses in the region.**

Drawing primarily on the journaling, one-on-one interviews and small group sessions with the fellows, the evaluation team has gained insights from the fellows that enable us to address the objectives for the project. The quantitative information collected from the fellows provided a picture of their ability to assist entrepreneurs in creating new businesses and in building the network of support infrastructure in the region. The outcomes achieved by each KECI class are presented separately below. The recommendations that follow later in this report are based on the combined outcomes of both classes.

### **Outcomes for KECI Class I**

**Quantitative Outcomes.** At the last session and on the study tour, the evaluation team collected data on the accomplishments of each coach during their fifteen month training period. It should be noted that these fellows “graduated” from training in November 2005, and no data on outcomes has been collected from them since that time. Undoubtedly, these fellows have garnered even more results during the post-training phase that are not captured in this report. There was no expectation that the major benefits of the training would be recorded while the training was ongoing, but the results were impressive concerning the fellows’ ability to apply their training for immediate benefit in developing an entrepreneurial culture in Kentucky.

The quantitative assessment of their accomplishments is summarized in Table 1. It should be noted that these data are the most easily measured and suggestive

of the evaluative metrics collected and do not capture all of the activities of the fellows.

The results of this quantitative evaluation suggest that the fellows were actively involved in building their own skills and, in turn, using them to create a culture of entrepreneurship in Eastern Kentucky. The numbers are impressive. Fellows had contact with 1162 entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs, providing information about the coaching process and helping to increase awareness of the benefit of entrepreneurship in Kentucky. Over 500 of these contacts were in small groups and there were 166 meetings between the fellows and persons interested in learning more about partnering with an entrepreneurial coach – an average of six personal contacts with entrepreneurs for each coach. This outreach was significant given the fact that fellows were still in training and they had to build their networks to identify entrepreneurs who might be candidates for coaching.

The fellows actually recruited and entered into a coaching relationship with 115 entrepreneurs in the region. This is a significant contribution to entrepreneurship development in Kentucky when put in context. Up to this point, resources for entrepreneurs in the region involved an extensive network of small business offices and innovation centers, as well as other programs, but there was no resource to help entrepreneurs integrate their use of the various services. The KECI program, in one year, reached 115 entrepreneurs who engaged in a process to develop new business skills and capacity. The capacity of the fellows to continue developing additional coaching contacts is of course unknown, but there is very strong evidence that the program has achieved its goal of proving that coaching resources can be made available effectively to entrepreneurs and that entrepreneurs will use the coaching services when appropriate.

In addition, Table 1 identifies the partnerships developed between the fellows and other service providers in the region. A total of 55 entrepreneurs were referred to service providers in the area, and 12 entrepreneurs were in turn referred to fellows by the service providers. These service providers included small business centers, innovation centers, chambers of commerce, university and college training programs, and other regional resources. These service providers became strong partners because the KCEI fellows were out in the community making presentations and becoming known as a resource for these service providers, rather than competitors. The number of presentations was impressive: the fellows made 416 informal presentations and 88 formal presentations in their communities. The typical informal presentation was a meeting or interview with a county judge, a chamber of commerce president, leaders of a business association, or a meeting with the economic development

**Table 1. KECI Class I – Connecting with the Region**

Metric	Total – All Fellows	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Number of contacts with entrepreneurs</b>	1162 (562*)	20*	1	300+
<b>Number of initial meetings with entrepreneurs</b>	166	6	0	40
<b>Number of entrepreneurs coached</b>	115	4	0**	19
<b>Number of entrepreneurs referred to Service Providers</b>	55	2	0	12
<b>Number of entrepreneurs referred by Service Providers</b>	12	--	--	--
<b>Number of meetings with Service Providers</b>	115	4	0	30
<b>Number of informal presentations in the community</b>	416	15	0	100
<b>Number of formal presentations in the community</b>	88	3	0	10

\* Excludes two fellows who had 300+ contacts through a conference.

\*\* One fellow had 5 coaching possibilities but had not yet begun the coaching process when these metrics were collected.

agency in their county. Formal meetings included presentations to county boards or conferences, as well as monthly meetings of various organizations. The large number of these contacts took entrepreneurship from a hidden topic

and made it a visible and frequently discussed topic in Eastern Kentucky as will be shown in the sections that follow.

The coaching experience was generally positive according to reports from the fellows, though all discovered that the process of helping an entrepreneur start a business is a long road and few fellows were able to see the results of their work during their training. Table 2 shows the outcome of the coaching experience for the 115 coaching experiences that were reported. At the end of coaching, about half of those coached – 60 – reported that they were in business or in the process of starting a business. Some of these persons were already in business but felt that they were not doing as well as they wished or they needed to expand or transform their business. A total of 15 of these businesses approached a financial institution for capital and 9 businesses reported that they increased their employment while being coached. Another 15 maintained their business, usually informally reporting increasing success in terms of product or marketing, and often profitability.

Coaching successfully led to other outcomes which are valuable in the community context. Nine entrepreneurs who started coaching decided not to start their business either because it was not feasible or because the time was not right for them. This should be considered as a success because the individuals involved saved their personal time and often significant investment of personal wealth that might otherwise have been wasted. An additional 33 entrepreneurs were referred to other service providers who had more specific means of providing assistance, which is a desirable and expected outcome of the coaching process. Interestingly, 27 entrepreneurs dropped out of coaching. In exploring the reasons for this, the conclusion is that there are many reasons entrepreneurs drop out but they are mainly for personal or professional reasons, such as a sick spouse or a new opportunity working for someone else.

**Table 2. KECI Class I – Coaching Outcomes**

Entrepreneurs who...	Total – All Fellows
<b>Dropped out of coaching</b>	27
<b>Were in the process of starting up or had started up a business</b>	60
<b>Decided not to start a business</b>	9
<b>Approached a financial institution for capital</b>	15
<b>Increased employment</b>	9
<b>Maintained their business</b>	15
<b>Were referred to other service providers for assistance</b>	33

We caution that the quantitative results of the KECI program should not be over-interpreted because they are only the tip of an iceberg. The facts that the

fellows made contact with over 1000 entrepreneurs, coached 115, and made 416 informal presentations in their communities are the relevant indicators that the program is creating both a cohort of exceptionally trained and dedicated civic leaders who have new skills and capacity to transform the culture of their region, and that these leaders are effectively transforming community resources and institutions into a powerful network of professional service providers that can provide assistance well beyond what volunteers can do. In just 15 months, these 28 KECI fellows created a groundswell of positive energy for entrepreneurship that simply was not present in this part of Kentucky before.

**Developing Coaching Skills to Support Entrepreneurship.** The KECI seminars were designed to provide the fellows with the skills needed to effectively coach entrepreneurs in their communities. There is clear evidence that the fellows have developed the fundamental skills to be effective coaches. There was general consensus that the Supercoaching™ workshop was the most useful in giving fellows the specific coaching skills they needed to work effectively with entrepreneurs. After the coaching seminars, there seemed to be a shift in the fellows' attitudes from one of "what have I gotten myself into" to one of "I've learned more than I could have imagined when I started the program."

The fellows generally reported that they have built up their skill and knowledge levels over the course of the seminars and that they feel confident in their abilities to coach entrepreneurs. Specifically, the fellows recognized now that the ultimate responsibility for business success rests with the entrepreneur and that their role is to "ask relevant questions and perhaps steer the entrepreneur in the direction that will best suit his/her needs." A number of comments from the fellows testify to this enhanced capacity:

- "The content has empowered us and we can now overcome stumbling blocks in our communities."
- "There are two or three defining moments in a career and this is one of them for me."
- "This was our best experience to date. I actually got to work through some step by step procedures that you could use in coaching. I feel more comfortable with the process."
- "I am also feeling more confident working one on one with entrepreneurs. I have also been more comfortable with the Socratic method of asking questions, rather than being the 'expert' all the time."

During the one-on-one interviews at the final seminar, the fellows were asked to identify the most valuable thing they learned from the KECI process. Overwhelmingly, the fellows identified an expanded skill set as the most valuable outcome. Specifically, they identified the coaching and networking tools they

acquired, the increased understanding of resources available throughout their region and the state to assist entrepreneurs, and the ability to use appreciative inquiry to see the potential, and to help others see the potential, in their communities.

The enhanced skill set for fellows is confirmed by the final curriculum evaluation completed by the fellows during the final seminar. The results of that quantitative assessment are included later in this report.

**Building a Support Network of Fellows in the Region.** Another objective of KECI was to create a network of trained volunteer fellows in the northeast Kentucky region that would become a permanent part of the entrepreneurial support infrastructure in the region. One of the more powerful observations the evaluation team has made is the strength of the coaching network that has developed through the program. The fellows view themselves as a network, both for support and exchange of information. As one Fellow described, “the greatest satisfaction is that I feel that I have made some great contacts to expand my network and to be able to help my entrepreneurial clients.” And, from another Fellow, “I have realized that I am not alone. I have all the other fellows to network with. I think we will not only be coaching people but also coaching each other.”

It is clear from observing the fellows that there is a strong sense of rapport, support, and trust within the group. The fellows themselves describe their colleagues in glowing terms, such as:

- “Great group of people, close-knit.”
- “Powerhouse of coaches and great resource for communities.”
- “Lifelong friends and valuable regional working partners.”

The fellows are joining together for many activities, such as meeting with existing support providers, sharing information and expertise through a listserve, and collaborating on joint community projects. Fellows report that when they face a difficulty or need advice, they feel confident that one of their colleagues will assist them. Indeed, one of the most important long-range outcomes of this project may be this strong supportive network of community leaders that are dedicated to improving their region.

**Forming Alliances with Support Providers.** While the network created among the KECI fellows is strong, the fellows are also forming alliances with existing support providers. The networking seminar that introduced them to support providers in the region and provided them with training in networking to aid them in forming partnerships with providers was cited as valuable by many fellows. This seminar helped them realize “the power of networks because one

person cannot do it all” and that “no individual is an island, understanding needs and forming alliances based on skills and resources is crucial.” Fellows have reported making visits to Innovation Centers, Small Business Development Centers, tourism associations, local banks, and other agencies.

As expected, it has taken some time for the fellows’ identity and role as entrepreneurial coaches to be understood by service providers. As described earlier, the fellows made many presentations in their communities and developed new collaborations and awareness among the existing service providers. The most important and frequent service providers now in the network of entrepreneurship of the KECI project are listed in Table 3. This process of networking with existing service providers such as small business development centers, bankers, and economic development organizations has not always been easy. Fellows reported encountering resistance from service providers who viewed them as entering their “turf”. Fellows have begun to overcome this resistance by meeting with service providers and explaining their distinct role which likely will lead to increasing the number of clients for the service providers. The process of alliance building takes time but it is clear that fellows are actively networking with service providers in their region.

**Promoting Entrepreneurship within the Broader Community.** Fellows are actively working in their communities to promote entrepreneurship. Examples of their activities include starting a small business association, teaching a course for prospective entrepreneurs, presenting workshops to the chamber of commerce, leading a county-wide visioning program, talking with youth in the local schools, conducting information sessions about KECI within the community, and writing articles for the local newspaper. Table 3 also shows the types of community organizations and media outlets that were contacted by the first class of fellows. This resource for informing the community is essential for building a stronger entrepreneurial culture in the region.

Perhaps the best example of promoting entrepreneurship through active coaching within the broader community was the mini-grant process. The mini-grant projects had three primary purposes – to stimulate an entrepreneur-friendly climate in the region, to build regional cooperation and move beyond “county line” mentalities, and to learn leadership by doing. Each fellow was given access to up to \$1,000 in mini-grant funds. The fellows organized themselves into teams (2-5 fellows) to develop proposed regional projects. Each team was expected to identify a 25% match, either cash or in-kind, for the project. Then, each team had to present the project concept to the other fellows, address any questions or concerns about the project and gain approval from at least 75% of the fellows in order to proceed with the project. This process yielded benefits to the teams as the other fellows identified opportunities

for collaboration and resources and generally provided useful feedback on the projects.

**Table 3. KECI Class I – Networking Experience**

Categories	Organizations/Individuals
<b>Service Providers</b>	Bankers Innovation Centers Extension agents Small Business Development Centers Chambers of Commerce Main Street Programs Universities and community colleges Economic development organizations (public and non-profit) Sector specific organizations, e.g., arts councils
<b>Community Organizations/Individuals</b>	Elected officials Civic organizations, e.g., Rotary, Kiwanis Tourism groups Chambers of Commerce Boards of Education School students Women’s Garden Club Quilters’ Guild Universities and community colleges
<b>Media</b>	Newspaper articles (primary outlet for fellows) Internet blog Radio spots TV spots Public Service Announcements

The approved projects represented a diverse set of entrepreneurship-related activities in the region:

- Developing eco/agri-tourism businesses on farms
- Organizing a wood shims product development contest
- Creating an innovation center at a local technical college
- Starting a Youth Entrepreneurial Program (YEP) in the local high school
- Creating a student-run business at the local Technology Center
- Organizing a public relations/community education campaign to increase awareness and knowledge of entrepreneurship

The projects had a diverse set of outcomes as well. Appendix E describes in more detail the mini-grant projects that were developed and implemented by the fellows.

As a final way of assessing the fellows' ability to promote entrepreneurship within the broader community, the fellows were asked to identify the most important thing they bring to the region as a result of their participation in KECI. Three themes emerged. The fellows bring knowledge of resources that exist both inside and outside of the region and an understanding of how to connect with those resources – the networking skills that are so important to creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurs. The fellows also bring a new skill set to the region – the ability to coach and encourage entrepreneurs, something that early research identified as missing from the region. Finally, the fellows bring deep affection for the region and its people and a strong commitment to providing the leadership needed to increase awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship and to work toward the entrepreneurial development of the region.

**Developing and Maintaining Relationships with Entrepreneurs.** A fellow's primary responsibility is to develop and maintain a relationship with entrepreneurs in his/her community. In the early stages of the program, the fellows had varying experiences in generating "demand" for their services. Some fellows faced too much demand from entrepreneurs – more than they could accommodate. Others reported that locating entrepreneurs was their greatest challenge. Some communities may have a more closed and rigid approach to economic development and may not welcome this new approach. As one fellow stated early on, "I have currently scheduled three group informational presentations to spread the word about KECI in the next three weeks and I hope it will result in more individuals to coach." Hence, for some fellows, it took time to build up the community awareness and support so that entrepreneurs would be comfortable working with them.

All of the fellows are actively engaged in the process of coaching but the results vary from coach to coach. Each fellow was expected to actively coach at least one entrepreneur by the final seminar. Table 2 (presented earlier in this report) describes the coaching outcomes for the Class I fellows as a whole. Of the entrepreneurs who were coached by the KECI fellows, 60 were either in the process of starting or had started a business. Another nine had decided after coaching not to start a business – considered a successful outcome by most service providers. The entrepreneurs who were coached were having some success in building their businesses – 15 approached a financial institution for capital, nine increased employment, and 15 maintained their business. The fellows also showed a continued commitment to networking, referring 33 of their coaching clients to other service providers.

A fair number of entrepreneurs, 27, dropped out of the coaching process. This number requires some clarification. As part of the coaching process, the entrepreneur must complete a set of assignments (homework) before they can move forward with coaching. This requirement insures that the entrepreneur is fully committed to doing the hard work of building a business and that the coach is supporting, not directing, the entrepreneur's activities. The drop out rate may reflect the needs and attitude of the entrepreneur rather than the capacity of the coach – the entrepreneur may not be ready to commit to the coaching process or may have a specific need that requires business assistance but not coaching.

Of the two main activities of the fellows, coaching entrepreneurs and building a supportive community, each fellow tended to focus more on one activity or the other, based on skills, interest and position within the community. Some fellows coached numerous entrepreneurs, as many as 19, while others were extremely active in building support within the community for entrepreneurship through such activities as community presentations and camps for youth entrepreneurs.

**Building a Strong Entrepreneurial Support Structure and Entrepreneurial Culture.** The discussion above suggests that the KECI fellows are building a stronger entrepreneurial support structure and entrepreneurial culture in the region. The fellows have acquired a set of coaching and networking skills that is allowing them to fill a gap – facilitation or coaching of entrepreneurs – identified in the research that provided the background for this project. And, the fellows are actively coaching entrepreneurs within the region. The fellows are also networking with other elements of the support structure, service providers and community-based organizations.

The key question is whether this network of skilled, volunteer leaders and entrepreneurial fellows will become a permanent part of the region's support infrastructure. To gain some insight into this issue, the fellows were asked where they saw themselves, as a coach, in the future (up to three years). Almost all of the fellows expected to be coaching or otherwise actively engaged in their communities over the next three years. Most indicated they expected to be directly involved with entrepreneurs. A few of the fellows have recognized that they have more to contribute to the region by working toward local and state policy change that supports entrepreneurship as opposed to working one-on-one with entrepreneurs. However, these fellows would continue to refer entrepreneurs to other fellows in the region.

As a further measure of the fellows' ability to influence the long-term future of the region, six of the Class I fellows sought political office – five ran for county magistrate positions in Bracken, Harrison, Lewis and Mason (two) counties and one ran for the Kentucky House District #71 in the 2006 election. While each of the fellows faced entrenched incumbents and none were elected, they infused

ideas about entrepreneurship policy and building entrepreneur-friendly communities into the community conversation during the election. Yet another fellow is seeking local political office in 2007.

**Assessment of the Value of the Study Tour to Scotland.** A unique feature of the training curriculum was the study tour of Scotland that the fellows participated in from September 5 – 19, 2005. Because of the special character and expense of this trip, it merits a separate assessment in this report. A key goal was to learn from the entrepreneurial successes in Scotland and apply some of the “lessons learned” to strengthen policy, youth programs, and global connections among businesses in northeastern Kentucky.

The study tour included visits with local entrepreneurs, community leaders, and policymakers, particularly those in the more remote, rural parts of Scotland. For example, fellows visited with small successful companies in wind energy, salmon farming, equestrian business, furniture making, tapestries, and jewelry and clothing design. Some businesses were oriented toward local customers. However, most are successful in serving global markets in spite of their isolation. Youth entrepreneurship was also a focus of the tour, with visits to the Prince’s Scottish Youth Business Trust, WildDay, and the Lochinver Youth Project, three successful youth entrepreneurship programs.

Staff from the country’s two main economic development organizations (Scottish Enterprises and Highlands and Islands Enterprises) explained economic development approaches, particularly those that encourage entrepreneurship. The days were full and active with learning occurring in formal seminar settings, but also through informal contacts, such as dinner conversations, with local entrepreneurs and community leaders.

Our assessment is based on written evaluation forms completed by the fellows for each day of the tour and an overall evaluation completed at the end of the trip. Furthermore, the final interviews with fellows at the November 2005 graduation also gathered their feedback on the Scotland trip. This information gives us a good sense of the learning that occurred. However, understanding how the fellows apply this learning to northeastern Kentucky would require further follow-up with fellows in their home communities.

The overall evaluation of the fellows was that the tour was valuable, best described as a “chance in a lifetime”. They appreciated the cultural differences and could see the benefit of visiting a foreign culture that is even more rural and isolated than Kentucky. Each coach found value in different presentations and visits. What is interesting is that those individual presentations or visits that were disliked by some fellows were nearly balanced by other fellows who thought it a highlight of that particular day.

If there was one overwhelming conclusion from the evaluations, it is that the fellows saw that people in an even more rural and isolated environment were succeeding through entrepreneurship, and that this inspired them to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities even more vigorously when they returned home. One fellow commented, "If you have the knowledge and the passion, you can do it, no matter how far out your place is." Other fellows' comments:

- Once in a life time experience.
- Will never forget all we've seen, people and businesses we met, and all the time we shared.
- A very special trip for me. Entire trip was amazing.
- Immersing KECI fellows in a different culture was a real eye-opener and a real plus.
- Great experience – I've been changed.
- Overall trip was wonderful and the chance of a lifetime. Absolutely incredible!
- Insights from trip will help us come up with new ideas, or just to believe in our communities enough to reach for the top.

Some of the highlights included the chance to learn about youth programs and to meet youth entrepreneurs. The crofters were especially interesting to the fellows because of their agricultural economy, isolation, and tenacity. Fellows learned a lot from the agriculture and craft entrepreneurs that were visited, but in addition some high technology and tourism ventures proved exemplary. There were many similarities between the kinds of entrepreneurial businesses that succeed in Scotland and the fellows' experience in Kentucky, and this made the trip relevant. They were less interested in the differences and similarities between the support institutions and associated programs in Scotland and in Kentucky.

The fellows took this tour very seriously. The overwhelming sense from the evaluations was that they wanted more reflection and learning rather than less. Several fellows wanted more debriefing and evening reflection sessions. They quibbled over the means of the presentations and their ability to absorb the material presented, but there was no questioning the trip's goal of understanding what entrepreneurs were doing in Scotland.

A final benefit that was mentioned by fellows in the evaluations was the extent to which the fellows learned from each other and became a closer-knit group. One coach said at a session that "there are no more secrets" among the fellows, and it was obvious that the extensive time they spent together increased their group cohesion.

The numerical results from the evaluation forms also indicate the high value that the fellows assigned to the trip, as indicated in Table 4. The overall score for the content of the trip was 4.5 on a 5-point scale with 5 being the highest (excellent).

**Table 4. Summary Information from the Scotland Study Tour Evaluations – Class I**

Day of the Tour	Usefulness of Learning Content*	Effectiveness of Presentation*
1 & 2	3.14	3.07
3	3.86	3.70
4	3.65	3.52
5	3.96	3.76
7	3.67	3.56
8	4.08	4.29
9	4.38	4.54
Overall	4.50	4.14

\*Average rating on a 1-5 scale where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

The fellows had suggestions for improving future trips. Two suggestions seem particularly noteworthy. First, the fellows wanted fewer Power Point presentations and more interaction, perhaps in smaller groups. They complained about being in lectures, sitting too long, and not having interaction. They consistently preferred meeting entrepreneurs to policy wonks. Also, they liked being in smaller groups with resource people.

Second, fellows felt that the trip was over-scheduled and would have liked more time for personal matters. The pressure of being late caused a lot of stress, and the fellows disliked having too many places to be each day, with long days, late dinners, and no lag time in case of delay. Throughout the tour the fellows wanted more free time (especially at the start of the tour when there was almost none) to take care of personal matters.

## **Outcomes for KECI Class II**

**Quantitative Outcomes.** As was done with Class I, the evaluation team collected data from the Class II fellows during the trip to Scotland and at the graduation seminar. Table 5 presents some of the outcomes achieved by these fellows during the 15 months of their training program. As with the first class, the second class of fellows showed clear evidence of using their newly acquired skills to reach out to entrepreneurs throughout the region and to spread the word about the importance of entrepreneurship development. These fellows had contact with 747 entrepreneurs and had initial meetings with 135 of them – an average of five personal contacts with entrepreneurs per coach.

**Table 5. KECI Class II – Connecting with the Region**

Metric	Total – All Fellows	Average	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Number of contacts with entrepreneurs</b>	757	230	2	250
<b>Number of initial meetings with entrepreneurs</b>	119	5	0	20
<b>Number of entrepreneurs coached</b>	46	2	0	5
<b>Number of entrepreneurs referred to Service Providers</b>	81	3	0	30
<b>Number of entrepreneurs referred by Service Providers</b>	24	1	0	5
<b>Number of meetings with Service Providers</b>	82	3	0	20
<b>Number of informal presentations in the community</b>	249	10	0	75
<b>Number of formal presentations in the community</b>	43	2	0	7

In total, Class II fellows were actively engaged in coaching 43 entrepreneurs, an average of two coaching candidates per coaching fellow. Again, these numbers are important since most fellows established these coaching relationships while

they were still actively engaged in the KECI training program. Most of the coaching fellows felt that their capacity for coaching was just being realized as they prepared for graduation and the fulfillment of their two-year commitment to continue to work with entrepreneurs in the region.

Since KECI was designed to enhance the work of other service providers in the region, not replace it, the interaction between Class II fellows and other service providers is important. The fellows referred 81 entrepreneurs to other service providers for assistance and received 24 referrals in return. The fellows reached out to service providers, holding 82 meetings with service providers as a way of strengthening the potential networking between existing service providers and the new group of entrepreneurial coaches in the region. Reflecting the agricultural focus of some of the Class II fellows, many of these service providers had a strong connection to agriculture, including cooperative extension, the Agricultural Development Board, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and others.

While the coaching experience was generally very positive, the fellows acknowledged the difficulty in reaching entrepreneurs and getting them to commit to the coaching process. Table 6 summarizes the outcomes of the coaching experience of the fellows. Of the 119 entrepreneurs that the coaches met with for an initial meeting (not coaching visit), 46 ended up being coached. While this figure represents only 39%, few of those coached (or in the process of being coached) had dropped out of the process at the time of graduation. More than half indicated they were in process or had started a business, 10 were maintaining their businesses and, equally important, nine individuals decided against starting a business after their coaching experience. As with Class I, this result should be considered a success since these individuals were able to avoid the financial loss and personal stress often associated with starting an ill-fated business endeavor because of the due diligence and research required of them as part of the coaching process.

**Table 6. KECI Class II – Coaching Outcomes**

Entrepreneurs who...	Total – All Fellows
<b>Dropped out of coaching</b>	1
<b>Were in the process of starting up or had started up a business</b>	26
<b>Decided not to start a business</b>	9
<b>Approached a financial institution for capital</b>	4
<b>Increased employment</b>	3
<b>Maintained their business</b>	10
<b>Were referred to other service providers for assistance</b>	9

**Developing Coaching Skills to Support Entrepreneurship.** As was the case with Class I, each seminar provided the fellows with the opportunity to add to and build on their coaching skills. Comments at the end of the first seminar reflected some trepidation with the new and, for many, unknown journey they were undertaking – “the amount of information was overwhelming” and “very challenging...I need to think about this more” and “helped me realize the need for more training.” The Supercoaching™ workshop was most focused on building coaching skills for the fellows. While the fellows were generally positive about what they learned in the seminar – “great opportunity to clarify knowledge,” “enlightening, inspirational, pragmatic,” “a highly intense, fast paced workshop, but the content has been absolutely invaluable” – a number of suggestions were made to improve the delivery of this content and these suggestions are incorporated into the final recommendations section of this report.

Overall, the Class II coaches have refined their view of what a coach is, a listener and reflector instead of an advice giver, and have enhanced the skills needed to be an effective coach and community leader. The fellows identified the following skills as important outcomes of KECI:

- “how to ask the right questions – how to ask good questions”
- “Networking...the power of networking!”
- Ability to be a “catalyst for change”
- Ability to reach across county lines; “there are no boundaries”
- Applying Appreciative Inquiry and “building on what’s already there”

The improved skill set of the Class II fellows is confirmed by the final curriculum evaluation completed during the graduation seminar. Charts 4-6 later in this report provide the results of that evaluation and show a marked improvement in most skills over the course of the training.

**Building a Support Network of Fellows in the Region.** No two groups are alike and that proved true for the two classes of fellows. The Class II fellows formed a tight network of coaches by the end of the training and the nature of this network might be described as primarily professional. However, it was also evident that the networking between Class I and Class II was not uniform throughout the region. In some counties, fellows from both classes were working together on specific projects. In other counties, the fellows had no communication or interaction with each other. It was also clear that the Class II fellows would have benefited from mentoring by the first group of fellows – to share challenges and concerns, to make connections and to collaborate on projects, and to move forward as equal participants in the KECI program. Given the volunteer nature of KECI and the demands placed on the fellows, the responsibility for intentionally facilitating networking and mentoring across the

classes will fall on the project leaders rather than individual fellows if the goal of building a support network of fellows in the region is to be fully realized. Still, to the credit of the Class II fellows, they worked to overcome a voiced concern and perception of being compared to Class I fellows and this became a contributing marker of individual and group cohesion and growth. The recommendations section of this report has more on this issue.

**Forming Alliances with Support Providers.** The Class II fellows were reaching out to existing support providers in the region, introducing themselves and the KECI program. In some ways, this networking was facilitated by the experience and efforts of the Class I fellows, particularly with statewide organizations such as the Innovation Centers and the Small Business Development Centers. However, in individual communities, the coaches still faced the challenge of communicating their identity and role to local organizations that, in turn, could help the coaches reach more entrepreneurs. Table 7 describes the types of service providers and community groups the coaches reached as they spread the word about entrepreneurship generally and KECI in particular.

**Promoting Entrepreneurship within the Broader Community.** In addition to coaching entrepreneurs, the KECI fellows have an important role to play in promoting entrepreneurship within their communities. Indeed, some of the fellows viewed their role of community coaches and leaders as equally important to that of an entrepreneurial coach. While most of the community engagement was through the mini-grant projects described below, some of the coaches were involved in other community projects, such as a Youth Fest that has become an annual event in one community and a multi-county agri-tourism project that began as a mini-grant project in Class I and now includes coaches (and others) from both classes.

The primary means of engaging with communities, however, was the mini-grant projects undertaken by the Class II fellows. While not all of the projects were completed at graduation, these mini-grants reflect the creative thinking and commitment of the fellows to actively engage their communities in encouraging entrepreneurship. The mini-grant proposal process was the same for both classes however there were some important lessons learned from the implementation of this process in Class II that are described in the Recommendations section. The mini-grant projects evolved over time and several were substantially changed based on the enthusiasm generated by and the lessons learned from the experience with youth entrepreneurship in Scotland. The projects and their status at the time of graduation are described briefly:

- Kentucky Youth Challenge 2007 – Competition for teams of young people with innovative ideas for starting a business is in process.

- KECI ArtsLinks – Grant competition for artists and arts organizations in three counties was established, with funds dispersed in January 2007.

**Table 7. KECI Class II – Networking Experience**

Categories	Organizations/Individuals
<b>Service Providers</b>	Bankers Innovation Centers Extension agents Small Business Development Centers Federal agencies (such as USDA-RD) Economic development organizations (public and non-profit) Dept of Tourism Govt. Office of Ag Policy Universities and community colleges Arts councils
<b>Community Organizations/Individuals</b>	Elected officials Civic organizations, e.g., Rotary, Kiwanis Tourism groups Chambers of Commerce Master Gardeners Extension Council Historic Society Agricultural Tourism Group Women’s Group Church Groups Leadership Owen County Volunteer fire departments Master Cattlemen Beekeepers’ Association Farmer’s Markets Farm Bureau DAR Beautification Committee School boards and superintendents State Fair University and community college groups Executive Club Junior Achievement Entrepreneurship Club Community Hospitals NAACP Sunday School
<b>Media</b>	Newspaper articles (primary outlet for fellows) Radio spots TV spots

Public Service Announcements  
Newsletters  
Cable channel broadcasts

- Students Teaming for Entrepreneurial Progress (STEP) – Initial focus was to bring entrepreneurship education to the high schools but the group decided to join with the Youth Challenge project to bring their expertise in support of the competition.
- 2006 Innovative Farmer Awards – The team developed a competition that recognized 20 agri-entrepreneurs who were demonstrating innovative activities on the farm, culminating in an awards banquet in November 2006.
- The Nor-Easter – A regional newspaper page, to promote entrepreneurship activities and to stimulate interest among youth through a writing/photography contest, is under development and one school has participated initially.
- Free Range Egg Project – The team planned to provide interested entrepreneurs with the inputs (including hens) to produce free range eggs but they could not generate interest among farmers in the project.
- Targeting High School Youth – This team originally had plans for a business incubator but changed their focus following the trip to Scotland. Instead, they decided to partner with the Youth Challenge mini-grant project by developing and distributing a brochure throughout the region that promoted the Youth Challenge competition.

The mini-grant experience of Class II suggests the need to provide more guidance on the process of developing these projects to the fellows early on in the program. Further recommendations regarding the mini-grants are provided later in this report.

The fellows were also asked to identify what they bring to their region because of their participation in KECI. These skills or attributes may also contribute to promoting entrepreneurship in the broader region. Fellows' comments related to three general themes. One, they brought confidence and the skills to effectively coach entrepreneurs in the region. Two, they had access to knowledge and resources throughout the state and region and could serve as a conduit between entrepreneurs in their counties and the resources they need to be successful. Three, they brought optimism, open mindedness and the ability, and legitimacy, to be a cheerleader for entrepreneurship in their counties.

**Developing and Maintaining Relationships with Entrepreneurs.** While the KECI fellows have developed strong support roles in their communities, another key goal of KECI was to have the fellows develop coaching and supportive relationships with entrepreneurs. The Class II fellows have established coaching

relationships with 46 entrepreneurs. However, the process of identifying potential entrepreneurs and marketing KECI within the community was difficult. The expectations for the fellows in terms of marketing and actively seeking out potential coaching clients did not appear to be clear. Several fellows suggested that the KECI project team should assume a larger role in promoting the program so that clients come to the coaches rather than the coaches having to seek out the entrepreneurs.

Once in a coaching relationship, few entrepreneurs dropped out (see Table 5). The attrition for Class II appeared to occur between the initial meeting to describe coaching and the first coaching session. Most of the entrepreneurs coached were actively involved in starting their businesses or had already started. As with any skill, the fellows differed in terms of their level of comfort with coaching and the time they had to devote to the program. Some were actively coaching a number of entrepreneurs, as many as five, while others had not yet entered into a coaching relationship. Others saw their role as one of a community leader focused on entrepreneurship as opposed to a coach for individual entrepreneurs.

**Building a Strong Entrepreneurial Support Structure and Entrepreneurial Culture.** It is clear that the KECI fellows in Class II have developed a set of skills and a network of resources that is being used to support entrepreneurs in the region. Through their coaching activities and mini-grant projects, these coaches are helping to build a support structure that will encourage entrepreneurship in the future. However, given the volunteer nature of KECI, one open question is the degree to which this capacity will be maintained in the region in the future. To provide insight into this question, the fellows were asked to identify where they see themselves, as entrepreneurial coaches, in six months, one year and three years. All but three fellows indicated that they would still be actively involved in coaching entrepreneurs or working on community or youth entrepreneurship issues in the next six months and over the next year. Only four fellows indicated that they would not be involved in coaching three years from now.

**Assessment of the Value of the Study Tour to Scotland.** One of the strong and unique features of KECI was the study tour to Scotland. The Class II trip was modified to address some of the issues raised during the first visit to Scotland. The sessions and visits were designed to be more interactive, i.e., fewer PowerPoint presentations, and there were additional opportunities to meet with youth. As with the first trip, the tour included visits with entrepreneurs, policymakers, politicians, and community leaders. In addition to visiting and learning from those who live in the remote Orkney Islands, the fellows visited with entrepreneurs and economic development staff in urban Dundee.

The visit was intense, filled with many opportunities to interact with entrepreneurs, both in formal presentations and informally. For example, the fellows participated with local entrepreneurs in Inverness during a Fusion event – a monthly networking event for entrepreneurs. They also had dinner with young entrepreneurs who participated in the Youth Challenge program in Scotland and were guests at the award banquet where the winner was chosen. Visits to local entrepreneurs, including artisans, retail merchants and the owner of a dolphin watching boat touring company, provided opportunities for the fellows to ask questions and learn more about the challenges of starting and growing businesses in rural Scotland.

The trip had benefits to the fellows as individuals and as entrepreneurial coaches. As individuals, the trip was described as “enlightening”, a “growing experience”, “invaluable – trip of a lifetime”, and as broadening horizons. For the fellows as coaches, the trip was described as:

- Bringing “coaching into focus”
- Inspiring and “rejuvenating”
- Making them want to come back and “share how others were doing it”.
- Providing an opportunity to see “their passion and creativity and ability to make business work even in isolated places”.
- Helping make her “more committed to making this happen in her community”.
- What he’s seen he can now describe.
- Making him “push harder to come up with better ideas – he’s seen other ways to do things”.

The daily evaluations completed during the trip support the general assessment of the value of the trip to the fellows. With few exceptions, the usefulness of the content and effectiveness of the presentations had an average rating of 4.0 or higher each day (Table 8). The overall ratings for content and presentation were 4.2 on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest (excellent).

The fellows did make specific recommendations to improve the trip in the future. Although the pace of the second trip was more relaxed than the first, fellows did feel the first two days in Scotland had too much scheduled. There was also concern expressed about the long travel time when the group transitioned from the Black Isle to the northern reaches of Scotland and the Orkney Islands – a logistical challenge that may be impossible to overcome. Finally, on a number of occasions, the fellows felt they had inadequate time to interact with entrepreneurs. This was particularly true during the fusion event and during a meeting with Scottish Enterprise mentors.

**Table 8. Summary Information from the Scotland Study Tour Evaluations – Class II**

Day of the Tour	Usefulness of Learning Content*	Effectiveness of Presentation*
1	4.2	4.0
2	4.4	4.4
3	4.1	3.9
4	4.3	4.2
5	4.1	4.2
6	4.4	4.4
7	4.1	4.2
8	4.4	4.5
9	4.4	4.5
10	3.9	4.0
11	3.7	3.7
12	4.4	4.1
Overall	4.2	4.2

\*Average rating on a 1-5 scale where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

## **Section VI - Summary of KECI Outcomes**

The KECI fellows in classes I and II have had both quantitative and qualitative impacts on the region. The fellows have developed supportive relationships with entrepreneurs through their contacts with at least 1300 entrepreneurs during the first 15 months of each class's participation in the program. The fellows had initial exploratory meetings with 285 entrepreneurs and developed coaching relationships with 161.<sup>3</sup> The fellows have continued to work on building alliances with service providers, referring 136 entrepreneurs to other service providers and receiving 36 referrals from them.

The fellows are also working toward building a stronger support structure and environment for entrepreneurs in the region by raising awareness of entrepreneurship through the concrete mini-grant projects as well as through their presentations in communities. With over 665 informal presentations and 131 formal presentations, the fellows are spreading the word about the importance of entrepreneurship development and their role as entrepreneurial coaches throughout the region.

Through the series of seminars over the 15 months of the program, volunteer community leaders received skill-building training in a number of key areas, enabling them to become entrepreneurial coaches and effective entrepreneurial leaders in their communities. To document the perceived change in the knowledge and skills of the entrepreneurial fellows as a result of their participation in KECI, a final curriculum evaluation was completed with the fellows at the November 2005 and 2006 graduation seminars. The fellows were asked to rank, across 10 skill or topic areas, their level of knowledge or skill before their participation in the institute and upon graduation, as well as the usefulness of these skills for their ongoing work:

1. Ability to use appreciative inquiry and/or asset mapping with community groups
2. Ability to make the case for entrepreneurship in your community
3. Ability to speak effectively to community groups about entrepreneurship
4. Ability to effectively coach entrepreneurs
5. Ability to develop a general networking plan
6. Ability to network with service providers
7. Ability to tap into sector-specific networks (e.g., agri-tourism, telecomm, etc.) to help entrepreneurs in your region
8. Ability to develop a plan for building entrepreneurial communities in your region
9. Ability to understand and learn from the experience of other countries or places in the U.S.

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<sup>3</sup> These numbers are likely to be higher as the Class I fellows have had another year of fulfilling their continued coaching commitment to KECI since the Class I data were collected in November 2005.

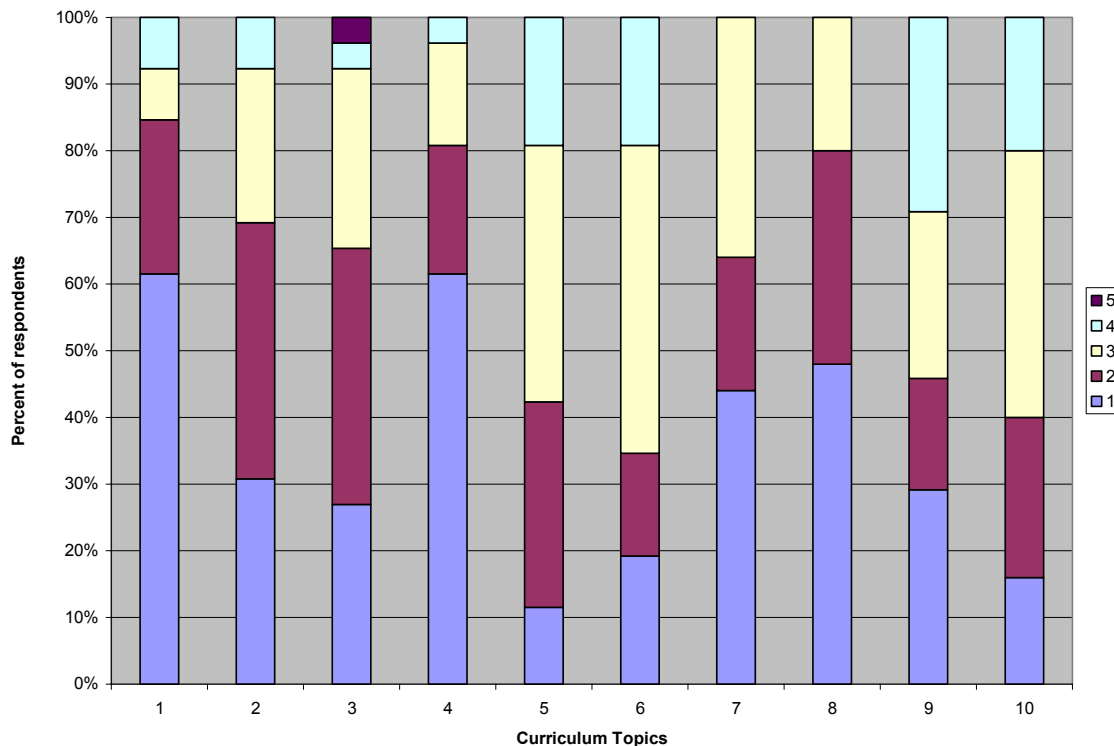
## 10. Ability to communicate effectively with the media

The following observations are based on the final curriculum evaluation (see Charts 1-3 for Class I and Charts 4-6 for Class II):

- Across most skill or topic areas, at least 70% of the fellows ranked their skill level as 3 or lower before their participation in KECI (Charts 1 and 4). The two exceptions were for networking and working with the media (topics 5 and 10) for Class II, where almost 60% ranked their skill levels as 3 or lower before KECI. After KECI, 80% or more of the Class I fellows ranked their skill levels as 4 or 5 across the board while 60-80% of Class II fellows ranked their skills as 4 or 5 (Charts 2 and 5). **These data suggest that KECI helped to improve substantially the fellows' coaching and community building skills, a primary goal of the program.**
- A number of areas showed dramatic change over the course of the institute. For Classes I and II, over 60% of the fellows ranked their ability to use appreciative inquiry and/or asset mapping with community groups as 1 or 2 prior to KECI and over 90% of Class I and over 70% of Class II ranked this skill as 4 or 5 after KECI. Over 60% of Class I fellows and almost 60% of Class II fellows ranked their ability to effectively coach entrepreneurs as 1 prior to the institute while about 80% from both classes ranked this skill as 4 or 5 after the program. Sixty percent of Class II fellows and 80% of Class I fellows ranked their ability to develop a plan for building entrepreneurial communities as 1 or 2 prior to the institute while almost 60% of Class II and 80% of Class I ranked this skill as 4 or 5 after KECI. **In terms of the key goals of becoming entrepreneurial coaches and building entrepreneurial communities, the fellows showed marked improvement in their skills as a result of the program.**
- In terms of usefulness to their work, the fellows ranked all of the skill or topic areas as being useful, with between 70% and 95% of fellows ranking as 4 or 5 every topic area. **These results suggest that the topic areas included in the coaching curriculum were appropriate to the needs and experiences of these volunteer leaders as they worked in their communities.**
- The value of the international experience included in KECI was affirmed through the final evaluations. While 30% of the fellows ranked their ability to understand and learn from the experience of other countries or places in the U.S. as a 4 or 5 prior to the institute, 95-100% ranked this topic as 4 or 5 after the Scotland trip. **Providing an opportunity for leaders from eastern Kentucky to learn from leaders in rural Scotland, as well as the bonding that occurred among fellows during the trip, was affirmed as an important and valuable part of the program's curriculum.**

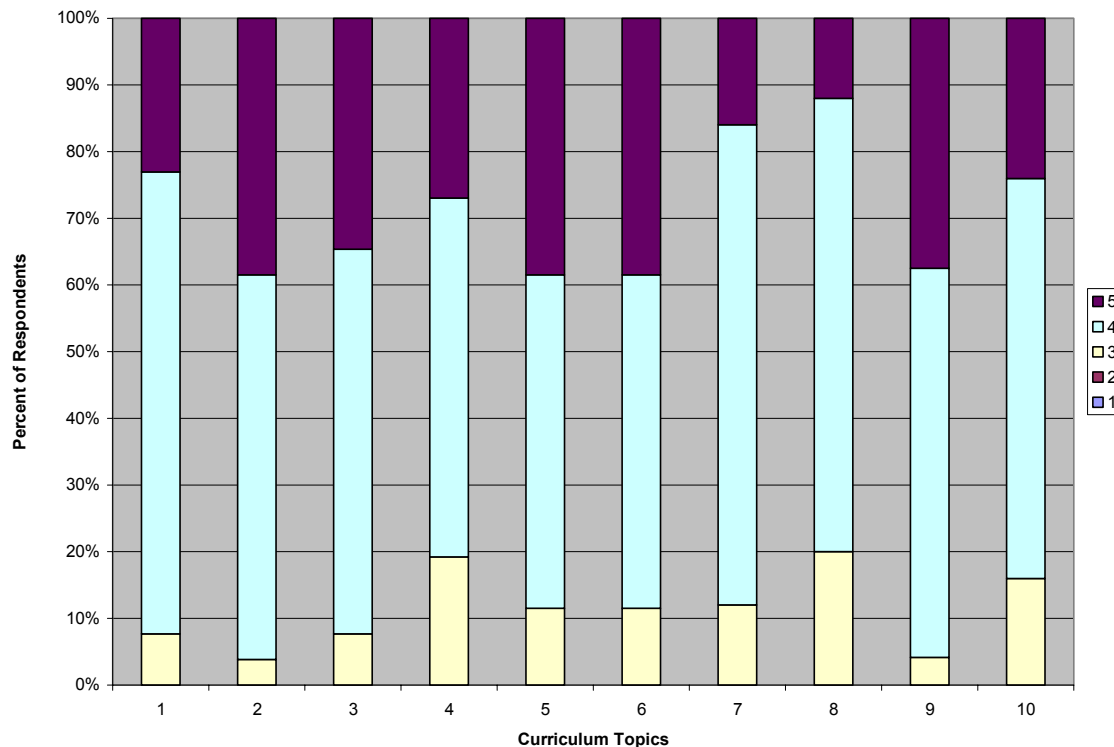
These results suggest that KECI is succeeding in building the skills of the volunteers to be effective fellows, to enhance the entrepreneurial support infrastructure in the region through their networking abilities, and to help promote entrepreneurship in the wider community. In summary, KECI has succeeded in meeting the objectives of the program.

**Chart 1. KECI Class I Final Curriculum Evaluation: Knowledge or Skills before the Institute (Scale: 1=lowest and 5=highest)**



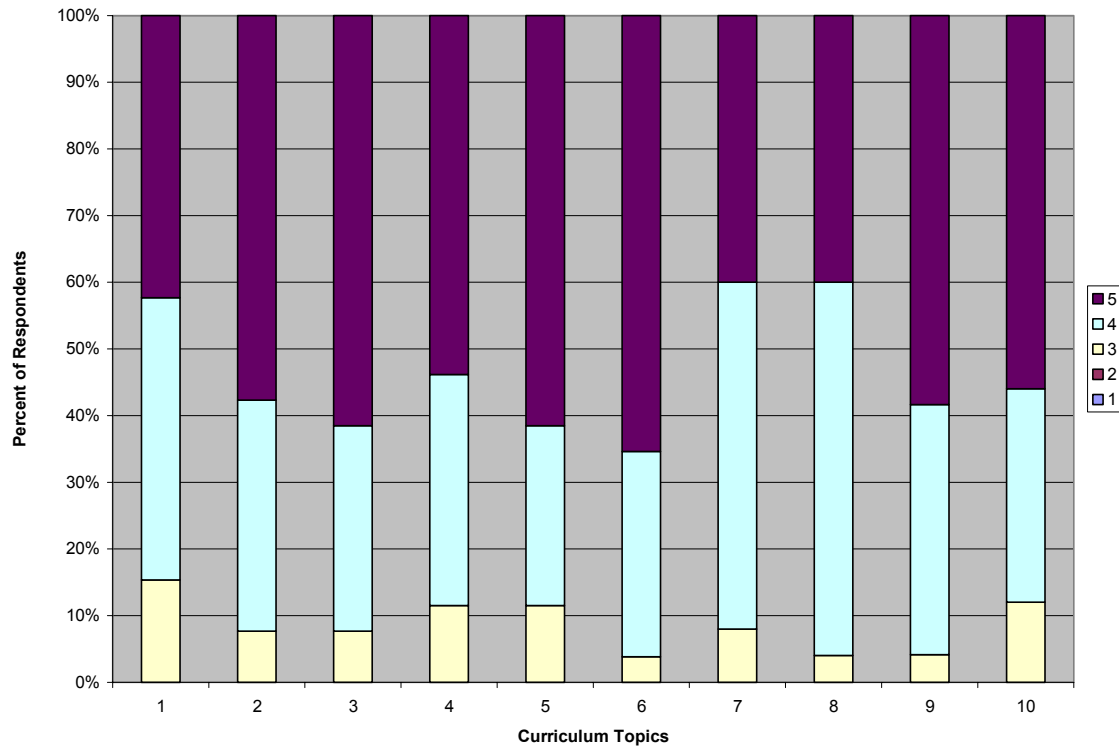
- Topic 1. Ability to use appreciative inquiry and/or asset mapping with community groups
- Topic 2. Ability to make the case for entrepreneurship in your community
- Topic 3. Ability to speak effectively to community groups about entrepreneurship
- Topic 4. Ability to effectively coach entrepreneurs
- Topic 5. Ability to develop a general networking plan
- Topic 6. Ability to network with service providers
- Topic 7. Ability to tap into sector-specific networks (e.g., agri-tourism, telecomm, etc.) to help entrepreneurs in your region
- Topic 8. Ability to develop a plan for building entrepreneurial communities in your region
- Topic 9. Ability to understand and learn from the experience of other countries or places in the U.S.
- Topic 10. Ability to communicate effectively with the media

**Chart 2. KECI Class I Final Curriculum Evaluation: Current Knowledge or Skills (Scale: 1=lowest and 5=highest)**



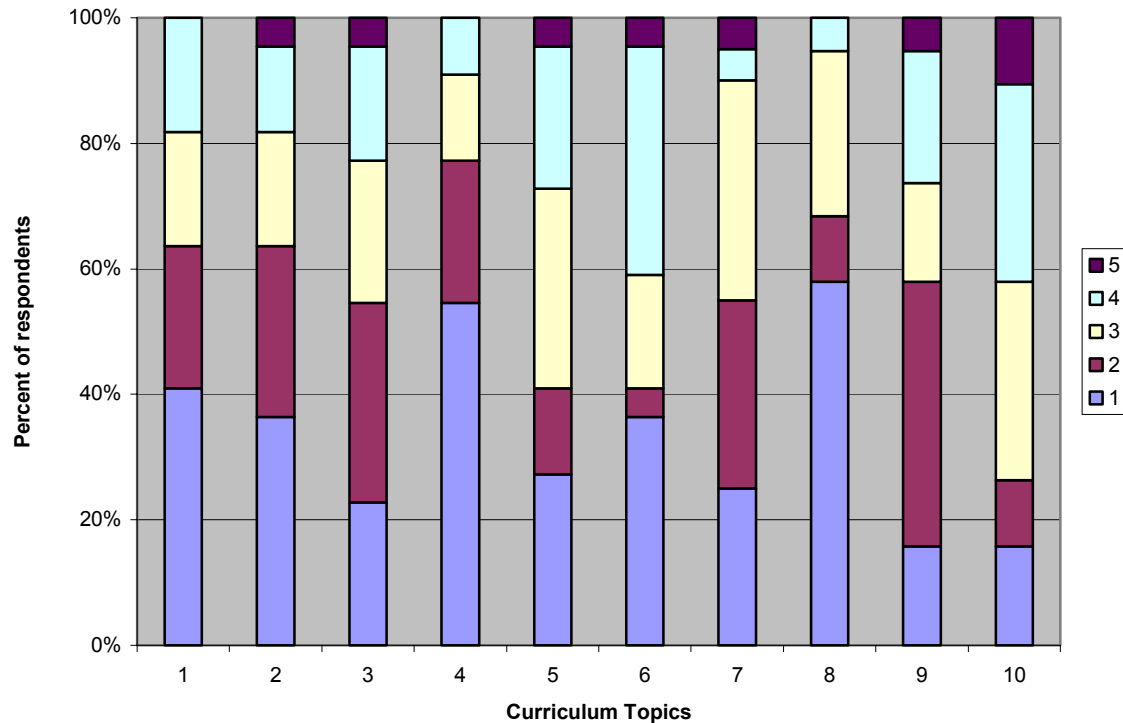
- Topic 1. Ability to use appreciative inquiry and/or asset mapping with community groups
- Topic 2. Ability to make the case for entrepreneurship in your community
- Topic 3. Ability to speak effectively to community groups about entrepreneurship
- Topic 4. Ability to effectively coach entrepreneurs
- Topic 5. Ability to develop a general networking plan
- Topic 6. Ability to network with service providers
- Topic 7. Ability to tap into sector-specific networks (e.g., agri-tourism, telecomm, etc.) to help entrepreneurs in your region
- Topic 8. Ability to develop a plan for building entrepreneurial communities in your region
- Topic 9. Ability to understand and learn from the experience of other countries or places in the U.S.
- Topic 10. Ability to communicate effectively with the media

**Chart 3. KECI Class I Final Curriculum Evaluation: Usefulness to your Work (Scale: 1=lowest and 5=highest)**



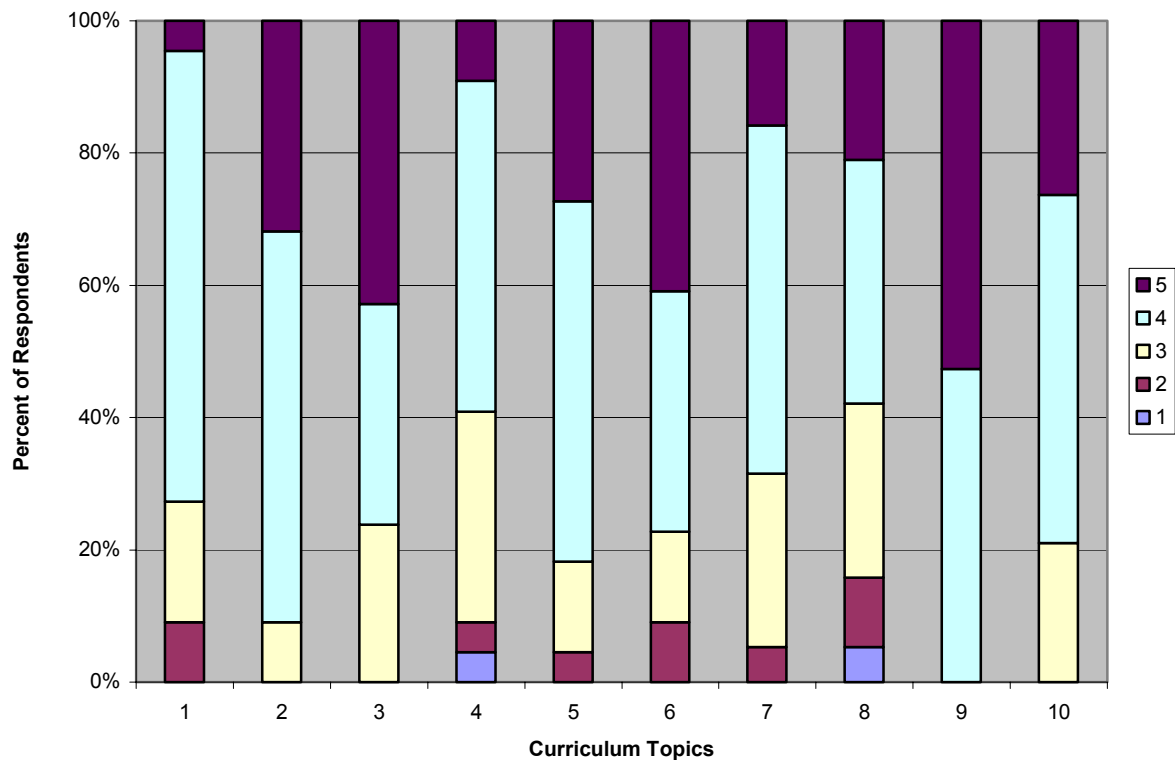
- Topic 1. Ability to use appreciative inquiry and/or asset mapping with community groups
- Topic 2. Ability to make the case for entrepreneurship in your community
- Topic 3. Ability to speak effectively to community groups about entrepreneurship
- Topic 4. Ability to effectively coach entrepreneurs
- Topic 5. Ability to develop a general networking plan
- Topic 6. Ability to network with service providers
- Topic 7. Ability to tap into sector-specific networks (e.g., agri-tourism, telecomm, etc.) to help entrepreneurs in your region
- Topic 8. Ability to develop a plan for building entrepreneurial communities in your region
- Topic 9. Ability to understand and learn from the experience of other countries or places in the U.S.
- Topic 10. Ability to communicate effectively with the media

**Chart 4. KECI Class II Final Curriculum Evaluation: Knowledge or Skills before the Institute (Scale: 1=lowest and 5=highest)**



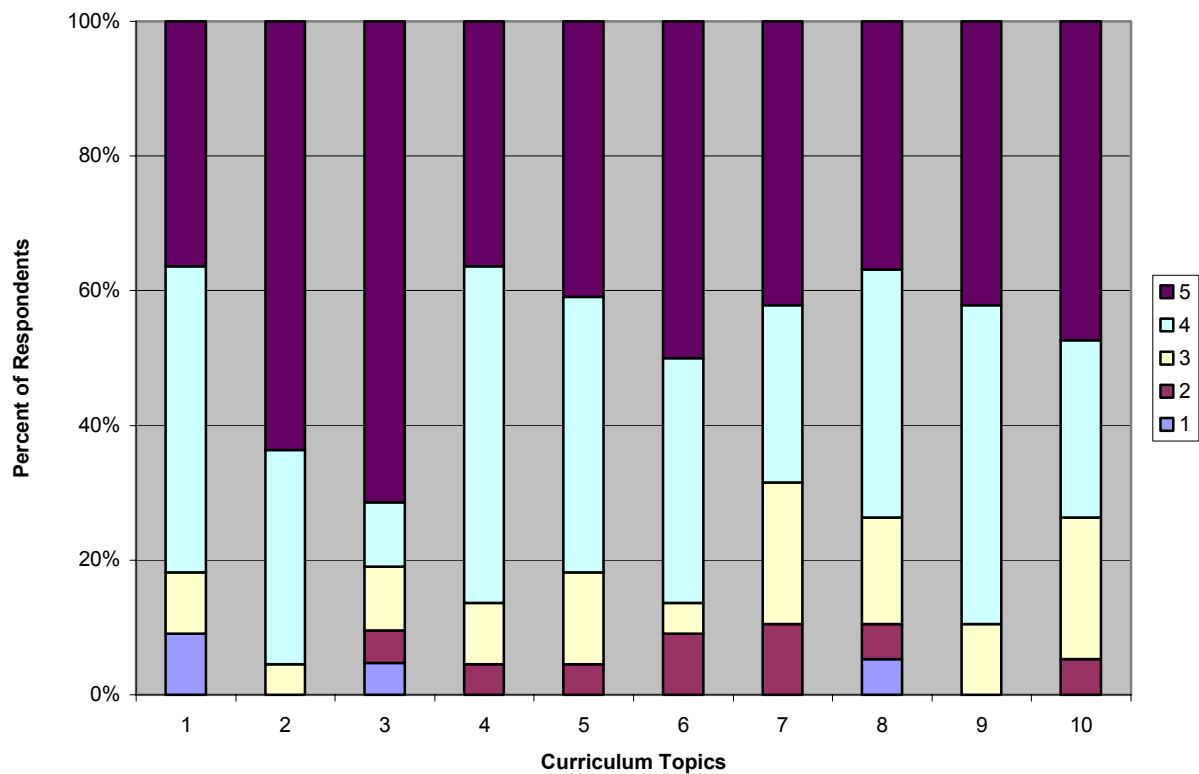
- Topic 1. Ability to use appreciative inquiry and/or asset mapping with community groups
- Topic 2. Ability to make the case for entrepreneurship in your community
- Topic 3. Ability to speak effectively to community groups about entrepreneurship
- Topic 4. Ability to effectively coach entrepreneurs
- Topic 5. Ability to develop a general networking plan
- Topic 6. Ability to network with service providers
- Topic 7. Ability to tap into sector-specific networks (e.g., agri-tourism, telecomm, etc.) to help entrepreneurs in your region
- Topic 8. Ability to develop a plan for building entrepreneurial communities in your region
- Topic 9. Ability to understand and learn from the experience of other countries or places in the U.S.
- Topic 10. Ability to communicate effectively with the media

**Chart 5. KECI Class II Final Curriculum Evaluation: Current Knowledge or Skills (Scale: 1=lowest and 5=highest)**



- Topic 1. Ability to use appreciative inquiry and/or asset mapping with community groups
- Topic 2. Ability to make the case for entrepreneurship in your community
- Topic 3. Ability to speak effectively to community groups about entrepreneurship
- Topic 4. Ability to effectively coach entrepreneurs
- Topic 5. Ability to develop a general networking plan
- Topic 6. Ability to network with service providers
- Topic 7. Ability to tap into sector-specific networks (e.g., agri-tourism, telecomm, etc.) to help entrepreneurs in your region
- Topic 8. Ability to develop a plan for building entrepreneurial communities in your region
- Topic 9. Ability to understand and learn from the experience of other countries or places in the U.S.
- Topic 10. Ability to communicate effectively with the media

**Chart 6. KECI Class II Final Curriculum Evaluation: Usefulness to your Work (Scale: 1=lowest and 5=highest)**



- Topic 1. Ability to use appreciative inquiry and/or asset mapping with community groups
- Topic 2. Ability to make the case for entrepreneurship in your community
- Topic 3. Ability to speak effectively to community groups about entrepreneurship
- Topic 4. Ability to effectively coach entrepreneurs
- Topic 5. Ability to develop a general networking plan
- Topic 6. Ability to network with service providers
- Topic 7. Ability to tap into sector-specific networks (e.g., agri-tourism, telecomm, etc.) to help entrepreneurs in your region
- Topic 8. Ability to develop a plan for building entrepreneurial communities in your region
- Topic 9. Ability to understand and learn from the experience of other countries or places in the U.S.
- Topic 10. Ability to communicate effectively with the media

## **Section VII – Recommendations**

Several recommendations are suggested by the results of the KECI evaluation. These recommendations fall into five general categories: improved skill development, building a network, the selection process, support for fellows and evaluating longer term outcomes. Specific ideas from the fellows that were shared with the evaluation team members in 2005 and 2006 are included in Table 9.

### **Improved Skill Development**

The results of the end of curriculum evaluation showed clear improvements in the fellows' coaching and community building skills. This also implies enhanced personal leadership capability. However, a number of improvements were suggested either directly by the fellows or by program evaluations throughout KECI.

The Supercoaching™ seminars provided fellows with the skills needed to become entrepreneurial coaches. Given the pace at which they were expected to begin interacting with entrepreneurs in their communities, the Class I fellows felt they needed to build these skills sooner in the program. However, the Class II fellows, who experienced Supercoaching™ earlier in the program, disagreed. They felt they had not had enough time to fully understand the program and to begin to come together as a regional network before they were immersed in the coaching curriculum. For these reasons, the original schedule for introducing coaching to the fellows is recommended.

Generally, fellows reported that the Supercoaching™ sessions were the most valuable learning opportunity in the KECI curriculum. However, some Fellows in both classes felt overwhelmed by the volume of information included in the Supercoaching™ seminars and felt that the intense pace of the seminars was not conducive to learning and applying the materials. The current schedule is driven, to some extent, by the need to bring the seminar leaders into Kentucky from outside the state, at considerable expense. It is recommended that the project team consider how to structure these seminars in a way that brings maximum benefit to the fellows, such as by splitting the material across two seminars, separated by time to apply what they have learned in their communities. While the fellows generally were very positive about the skills learned through the coaching seminars, there was concern expressed that the seminars should have been tailored more to the type of entrepreneurs they are likely to find in rural Kentucky – less high tech and more microentrepreneurs, artisans, agri-entrepreneurs, etc. The project team should consider how those seminars might be better tailored to Kentucky and explore the possibility of having someone from Kentucky become trained to deliver, and thus customize, the Supercoaching™ curriculum.

Finally, one area of skill development that needs to be addressed more explicitly in the curriculum is the mini-grant proposal development process. There was particular concern expressed by Class II fellows that they needed a better understanding of the goals for the projects and better guidance on the mini-grant process. It might be useful to have mini-grant development be incorporated into every seminar, even in a small way, so that the fellows have time to think about projects, build alliances with other fellows to pursue those projects, and put together a quality proposal. The review process should also be revised to allow all the mini-grant teams an opportunity to present their proposals, receive constructive feedback and revise proposals before the funding decisions are made by the group.

### **Building a Network**

One key to sustainability of KECI's impact is the success with which the fellows become a network within the region. Over the course of each 15-month program, the fellows developed connections with others in their class and with entrepreneurial support providers in the region. The challenge is how to incorporate each successive class into this network. It was clear from Class II feedback at the end of their program that they believed that more interaction with Class I would have improved the impact they might have in their communities.

One suggestion coming from Class I was to involve those fellows in teaching during the second year of the KECI program. While this approach was not used with the second class of fellows because of a strong preference by Class II to be viewed as their "own group," using fellows from the previous class as instructional resources for new fellows would be a valuable tool for KECI.

A second suggestion is to incorporate fellows from the two previous classes as coaching resource partners to the new fellows. Such partnering, particularly in terms of coaching skills, would provide novice coaches with a sounding board as they work to apply what they have learned in the seminars. For example, many fellows felt they needed a simple, step-by-step guide to coaching that they could have at their fingertips as they coached entrepreneurs. In Class I, a number of fellows were actively using a set of questions developed by one of the fellows, based on what she learned in the coaching seminars. Through a more intentional mentoring effort, this guide could be reproduced for all of the fellows in the program and shared from one class to another.

### **The Selection Process**

The KECI project team invested considerable energy in recruiting and selecting fellows so as to obtain talented, diverse, and committed individuals. Their efforts have been productive. The fellows have generally distinguished themselves with their maturity, performance, and team spirit. However, a few fellows did not

completely meet the program requirements or were reluctant to participate fully as members of the KECI team. This is perhaps inevitable and it is probably impossible to choose the perfect cohort.

However, there may be refinements in the selection process that might improve outcomes. In particular, the selection process might include a more detailed consideration of the background and commitment of candidates in fulfilling the goals and requirements of this project. Frank discussion with candidates about the KECI requirements and possible ways to balance these with family and professional obligations might be useful.

Furthermore, there should also be an assessment of the candidate's willingness to become a "team player". For the KECI network to be effective, fellows must be willing to work closely with one another, to learn their unique strengths and resources, and to refer entrepreneurs within the network so that they get the best possible support. The selection process would benefit from the inclusion of a conflict assessment diagnostic such as the Thomas-Kilman Inventory that provides insights regarding how a person views and manages conflict in various settings. Finding the right people to become KECI fellows also depends on articulating very clearly what the program is about, what the expectations are for individual fellows and for the group, and selecting individuals who bring a commitment to both individual and group development to the program.

### **Support for the Fellows**

The long-term impact of KECI on the northeast Kentucky region will depend to a large extent on continued efforts by the fellows to use their coaching skills to support entrepreneurs in the region. Although the training of the fellows has been excellent by all accounts, it is also important, in our view, for project staff to provide community-level, "hands-on" support, both technical and personal, to fellows as they graduate and begin their coaching work. While the project team is very supportive of fellows, they simply may not have the time to provide the field visits that are required. Furthermore, given the scheduling of KECI classes, it was difficult for the current project team to provide continued technical and personal support to one class of fellows once a new class was underway. Building the capacity of the KECI project team to provide ongoing support may be essential to the long-term success of the program.

One way of building this capacity would be to establish a new project position, a circuit-rider who provides technical and personal support to fellows as they expand their entrepreneurial coaching and their work on community projects. This position presumably would be funded by grant funds at least initially. The individual would establish a presence by the project staff in the communities and provide the individualized attention that fellows might desire. The circuit rider could also help to facilitate a fellows' network, stimulate use of the listserve that

facilitates communication among fellows, engaging the first class of fellows as mentors/teachers and allies, etc. An important function of this person would be to provide a connection between fellows in the two classes so that their activities within the region are complementary.

However, it is important that this support be provided in a way that does not encourage dependency on the University of Kentucky. The circuit rider's role would be to provide initial support to insure that the investment in the fellows and their network becomes a permanent part of the region's entrepreneurial support infrastructure and that it is firmly embedded in and supported by the communities and the region. One suggestion would be to enlist a KECI alumnus to serve as Fellows' Network Coordinator, on a permanent or rotating basis. While distinct from the circuit rider, this role would keep responsibility for energizing the network in the region, with the fellows. Just as the most effective entrepreneurial networks are "by entrepreneurs, for entrepreneurs," the Fellows' Network should be "by fellows, for fellows."

### **Evaluating Longer Term Outcomes**

This evaluation has assessed the initial outcomes achieved by the first two classes of coaches, primarily focused on their activities during the first year of the program. While the outcomes described in this report appear impressive, it is likely that they represent only part of what the coaches are accomplishing in their work with communities and entrepreneurs. To fully assess the impact of these first two classes of entrepreneurial coaches, longer term evaluation of their activities over the remaining two years of their commitment to the program is desirable. This follow up would require an additional two years of evaluation work, collecting data from each fellow about their coaching and community activities. In addition, such follow up evaluation would enable the evaluation team to conduct focus groups in communities to evaluate how the KECI fellows and their work in the communities is beginning to change the culture of the region. This longitudinal evaluation would provide better insight into how well the KECI program was contributing to the creation of a supportive, entrepreneurial culture in the region.

**Table 9. Challenges for Fellows, Improvements to Program and Best Aspects of KECI**

Challenges for the Fellows	Improvements to the Program	Best Thing about the Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding entrepreneurs to coach (or finding too many)</li> <li>• Finding the time to coach and not feeling guilty about not having time</li> <li>• Nobody knows fellows are out there; need more publicity. Who are the fellows?</li> <li>• People drop out or do not follow through</li> <li>• Difficult to create community environment – getting rid of sacred cows</li> <li>• Turf issues with SBDC and agri-tourism</li> <li>• Need for cheat sheet on coaching questions</li> <li>• Concern about long-term obligation required of fellows</li> <li>• Dealing with entrepreneurs with limited education levels</li> <li>• Collective effort needed to get elected and non-elected leaders working together</li> <li>• KECI web page has not been updated</li> <li>• Still a man’s world – challenging to get men to come to women for help</li> <li>• Need follow up on Supercoaching™</li> <li>• Struggle with using funds for KECI and impacts on farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step-by-step guide to coaching with real practical instructions; revise coaching seminars to better reflect region’s entrepreneurs (less high tech)</li> <li>• Create Supercoaching™ follow up - could sit in on next class; have some refresher role playing later in program</li> <li>• Set realistic expectations in terms of time and scope of work</li> <li>• Need two fellows per county to create support</li> <li>• Open up sessions to involve more people and contacts</li> <li>• Involve first cohort of fellows in training/facilitation of second cohort</li> <li>• Need for mentoring of new coaches</li> <li>• Less theory and more hands on exercises during the sessions – role playing to develop skills</li> <li>• Create system for disseminating materials they produce</li> <li>• Seminars are too intense – no time to catch up on work</li> <li>• Next group of fellows will benefit from groundwork these fellows are plowing – environment in communities will be different</li> <li>• Draw on Kentucky entrepreneurial resources and not so many external resources</li> <li>• More stringent recruiting and selection process to be sure all fellows are committed to both coaching and networking</li> <li>• Better marketing of KECI by UK in the region</li> <li>• All fellows should be comfortable with and use technology, i.e., email, websites</li> <li>• More preparation and education before the mini-grant process begins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal interaction with a great group of fellows – friendship, bonding, power of the collective</li> <li>• Information has benefited them in running their own businesses</li> <li>• Inspiring to be with these fellows</li> <li>• Two-three defining moments in a career and this is one of them</li> <li>• Being in group has developed their confidence; empowered them</li> <li>• Really liked the Supercoaching™ – provided with real, new skills</li> <li>• Networking skills were great</li> <li>• Could never have gathered this information on their own – unique learning experience</li> <li>• Responded to input and need for longer breaks!</li> <li>• Changed their way of thinking</li> <li>• Motivating</li> <li>• Helping to break down silos of service providers</li> <li>• Doing the right things to benefit our counties and communities</li> <li>• Broadened horizons</li> <li>• KECI as a catalyst for change in the region</li> </ul>

## Section VIII – Conclusions

This final evaluation report for the Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Institute has outlined the evaluation approach employed to assess the impact, outcomes, and process of KECI. The evaluation approach used information from end-of-seminar evaluations, journaling by the fellows, in-person interviews with fellows and analysis of data collected from each fellow. Furthermore, members of the evaluation team attended seminars and had many discussions, both in small groups and individually, with the fellows and project team.

The evaluation examines progress toward a set of program objectives:

- **Community leaders will develop the skills required to be effective coaches for entrepreneurs.**
- **A support network of entrepreneurial fellows in the region will develop out of the institute.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will form alliances with existing support providers in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will promote entrepreneurship within the broader community.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will develop and maintain relationships with entrepreneurs in the region.**
- **Entrepreneurial fellows will build a strong entrepreneurial support structure and entrepreneurial culture that stimulate entrepreneurs to start new businesses and expand existing businesses in the region.**

Definitive evaluation of the impact of KECI fellows will come at the end of their commitment to the program. Will the fellows continue to work with entrepreneurs and their communities to build a stronger, more supportive culture for entrepreneurship? All indications are that the KECI is an impressive program. There seems to be little doubt that the learning and training is now consistently very good to excellent and that fellows are well-prepared to be effective coaches. A very impressive network of fellows is emerging with a strong sense of mission and mutual support. Alliances with other resource providers are being created, although it will take time to establish the role of the fellows in the entrepreneurial support system. Many exciting community projects are underway or have been completed with the mini-grant programs. These projects should have an impact on expanding the knowledge and support for entrepreneurship on the local level. Finally, fellows are engaging entrepreneurs in the vital work of building and expanding businesses.

Is KECI a leadership program with a focus on entrepreneurship or is it an entrepreneurship program with a leadership component? This question has challenged the evaluation team from the outset. Based on our observations of

the first two classes of KECI, no clear answer to this question emerges. Indeed, rural eastern Kentucky, along with much of rural America, needs leaders who are knowledgeable and passionate about entrepreneurship AND entrepreneurial coaches who can bridge the gap between rural entrepreneurs and the support infrastructure. One thing is clear about the KECI program. KECI is one of the more demanding leadership programs in the country. The program was designed to insure accountability on the part of participants through the assignment of homework, the commitment to design and complete community projects in the region, and rigorous requirements for graduation. It was also clear that participants took seriously the investment of state money in the development of their leadership and coaching skills and were committed to giving back to their region – in most cases, above and beyond the minimum service commitment required of the program. The recommendations from the fellows and the evaluation team, specifically those related to encouraging sustainability through the use of a circuit rider and the follow up evaluation, provide an opportunity for “continuous improvement” of the program and should contribute to the productive evolution of this program.

KECI is an innovative and flexible program that is developing both leaders and coaches (often in the same individual) and it may well prove to be a national model for other rural places. Based on our findings that program effectiveness and operations are excellent, the next logical step for this “best in class” leadership program would be to extend KECI to other regions in the state.

## References

Scorsone, Eric, Tammy Marvin Werner, Kathleen Powers and Rita Somov. *The State of Entrepreneurship in Northeastern Kentucky: Current Trends, Best Practices, and Policy Implications*. Department of Agricultural Economics and Department of Community and Leadership Development, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, December 2003.

## Appendix A KECI End of Curriculum Evaluation

**Instructions:** We want to know how much you feel you learned about the various topics covered over the course of the 15-month institute. In the first column below, rate your level of knowledge and skill on each item **before** the institute. In the second column, rate your **current** level of knowledge and skill on each item. In the third column, please rate how **useful** you feel that content will be to your work as a coach. (5 = Highest Level of Knowledge or Skill or Most useful to your work)

	Knowledge or skill before KECI	Current knowledge or skill	Usefulness to your work
Ability to use appreciative inquiry and/or asset mapping with community groups	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ability to make the case for entrepreneurship in your community	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ability to speak effectively to community groups about entrepreneurship	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ability to effectively coach entrepreneurs	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ability to develop a general networking plan	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ability to network with service providers	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Ability to tap into sector-specific networks (e.g., agri-tourism, telecomm, etc.) to help entrepreneurs in your region

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

Ability to develop a plan for building entrepreneurial communities in your region

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

Ability to understand and learn from the experience of other countries or places in the U.S.

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

Ability to communicate effectively with the media

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

What would you like to tell the leadership team that would help them in developing the curriculum for future entrepreneurial coaching institutes?



## **Appendix C**

### **One-on-One Meetings with Fellows Graduation Seminar**

- 1. Briefly describe what the value of the Scotland trip was:**
  - **To you personally**
  
  - **To you as an entrepreneurial coach**
  
- 2. To give us some final feedback on the coaching program, complete the following:**
  - **The most valuable thing I learned from the KECI process was...**
  
  - **The most important thing I bring to my region because of this experience is...**
  
  - **If I could make one change to the program it would be...**
  
- 3. Where do you see yourself, as a coach, in:**
  - **6 months**
  
  - **1 year**
  
  - **3 years**
  
- 4. Review the metrics data sheet and update numbers (see separate sheet).**

## Appendix D Evaluation Data Sheet

Coach Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Assigned Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dates information gathered \_\_\_\_\_

Metric	Number
<b>Entrepreneurs in general:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ # of contacts (calls made to entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs who called the coach)</li> <li>▪ # of entrepreneurs with whom an initial meeting held</li> <li>▪ # of entrepreneurs coached (entrepreneurs who came back for more than one session)</li> <li>▪ # of entrepreneurs referred to other service providers (prior to coaching)</li> <li>▪ Other, please specify</li> </ul>	
<b>Coaching clients (those entrepreneurs who were actively coached):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ # who dropped out of coaching unexpectedly</li> <li>▪ # who are still in the process of organizing their new enterprise</li> <li>▪ # who decided to go into business</li> <li>▪ # who decided not to go into business</li> <li>▪ # who approached a financial institution with a loan application</li> <li>▪ # who increased employment</li> <li>▪ # who maintained the business</li> <li>▪ # referred to other service providers (after coaching)</li> <li>▪ Other, please specify</li> </ul>	
<b>Brief profile of each entrepreneur coached:</b>	
<b>Community:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ # of meetings with community</li> </ul>	

<p><b>groups, agencies, organizations (more informal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>List the organizations</b></li> <li>▪ <b># of presentations to community groups, agencies, organizations (more formal)</b></li> <li>▪ <b>List the organizations</b></li> <li>▪ <b># of newspaper articles, radio programs or other media coverage about entrepreneurs or coaching</b></li> <li>▪ <b># of community-based programs about entrepreneurship developed</b></li> <li>▪ <b>List the programs and briefly describe</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Service providers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b># of meetings with other service providers (such as SBDC, Innovation Centers, etc)</b></li> <li>• <b>Which service providers did you meet with? (Please list)</b></li> <li>• <b>Please list service providers to whom you referred entrepreneurs</b></li> <li>• <b># of entrepreneurs referred to you by service providers</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Other outcomes achieved (Please explain)</b></p>	

## **Appendix E**

### **Summary of the Mini-Grant Projects**

#### **Class I**

##### **Team 1. New Opportunities on the Farm (Gwenda Adkins, Lynn Baker, Kay Boggs, Teresa Brown, Don Davis, Paula Franke, Anthony Lawson)**

This team organized a mini-conference emphasizing alternative crops and agritourism. The goal was to educate local farmers, landowners, elected and appointed officials about the opportunities with alternative crops and agritourism-related businesses. The conference was held in the fall of 2005, with 66 participants. The evaluation results were positive, with 67% of respondents indicating that the forum was excellent and 94% indicating that they would be in favor of having another conference in the region. One important outcome of the mini-grant process is that seven county judges are now working together to strengthen the economy through alternative crops and agritourism. They are seeking support for a full-time agritourism person to work in the multi-county region. The group has put together funding proposals seeking both foundation and Appalachian Regional Commission support for their efforts. In the short term, they are developing a database of information on alternative crops and agritourism opportunities and resources for area farmers.

##### **Team 2. An Innovation Center for the Region (Melony Furby, Craig Miller, Annette Walters)**

This team worked to gain support for creating an Innovation Center in a six-county region (Bracken, Fleming, Lewis, Mason, Nicholas and Robertson counties) to be housed at Maysville Community and Technical College. This Innovation Center would be the starting point for entrepreneurs in the region to gain access information and assistance for their business ventures. While they did not expect to see the Center created during the span of the mini-grant project, they hoped to get local and state acceptance for the Center and a commitment by the college to house the Center. While the team was successful in communicating about the need for and opportunity presented by a Center within the region, decisions about creating more Innovation Centers are now on hold because of leadership changes at the state level. However, the team succeeded in raising awareness about the limited services for entrepreneurs within the region and an interim response has emerged – Morehead State University and Maysville Community and Technical College are now talking about how they can partner to bring the services of the SBDC (house at Morehead State) to the region.

##### **Team 3. Unbridled Business (Johnathan Gay, Larrey Riddle, Kristel Smith, Rebecca Smith, Rebecca Webb)**

The goal of this team was to create a public relations campaign to increase awareness and knowledge of entrepreneurship within the region. The vehicle they chose to facilitate this campaign was the creation of a website – [www.unbridledbusiness.com](http://www.unbridledbusiness.com). This user-friendly website offers easy to understand information for entrepreneurs and directs them to the resources that can help them, including the KECI fellows in the entire 19-county region. The site also features stories of successful entrepreneurs in the region, a powerful tool for making the case for entrepreneurship. The team also created a series of advertisements to build awareness about the KECI fellows and the new website.

#### **Team 4. Harrison-Nicholas County School-Based Enterprise Project (Alyson Arthur, Avi Bear, Bob Bedford, Alex Kazunas)**

The goal of this project was to create a web-based, student run school store and to facilitate the sales and marketing of student-produced products and services. The store was established at Harrison County ATC, in partnership with the teachers and staff at the school. By November 2005, six students had established the company, techCo, and had assumed staff responsibilities. They had organized a product development campaign, including a competition for marketable products and services, but had not yet achieved the goal of sales. Given the enthusiasm of the students and the school, this concept appears to be a good one and there was some interest among other fellows in documenting the process so that it might be replicated in other parts of the region. A refinement of the model would include some type of entrepreneurship curriculum for students interested in organizing a school-based enterprise before they undertake the business start-up process.

#### **Team 5. Wood Shims Contest (Mike Jackson, Gail Lincoln, Sue Nickell)**

The goal of this project was to discover products made from wood shims that could be commercialized, becoming the basis for either home-based or mass production enterprises in the region. To achieve this goal, the team organized a Wood Shims Contest to identify potential products. The contest received 43 entries and several potential entrepreneurial opportunities emerged – a Martin county resident is making and selling jewelry made from wood shims at a museum in Paintsville; a contest winner is making garden sheds from the shims; one product, fruit baskets, has the potential to be mass produced for sale to farmers markets, produce auctions, etc.; another product, kindling bundles, has the potential to be produced and sold through state parks. The team is planning to build on the momentum created by the contest and is actively seeking a partner, such as a community college, to help incubate a business to produce the fruit baskets and the kindling bundles.

**Team 6. Youth Entrepreneurial Program (Jim Cooksey, Becky Fogle, Keith Herrin, Kim Strohmeier, Tony Watkins)**

The goal of this project was to establish at least one high school Youth Entrepreneurial Program (YEP) in each of the four counties served by the fellows on the team. The idea was to train teachers in web design and they, in turn, would train students in web design and the basics of starting a business. The project also provides an opportunity for the schools to purchase the hardware and software needed to get these school-based enterprises up and running. To date, the teachers have been trained and programs established in the schools, two schools have made requests for equipment, all of the YEP groups have been introduced to the business community (their prospective clients) and one YEP has completed a project.

**Class II**

**Team 1. Kentucky Youth Challenge 2007 (John Hodge, David Kramer, Ralph Brown)**

The goal of this project was to establish the Kentucky Youth Challenge contest to bring awareness of entrepreneurial opportunities to the youth in Kentucky, especially the Highlands area of Eastern Kentucky (the focus area for KECI). The idea for this competition was developed as a direct result of the trip to Scotland and a similar youth entrepreneurship program there. The intent was to have students (20 years old and younger) form teams to develop ideas for new products or services. Teams, including an adult mentor, will move through the phases of the competition and rewards will be offered at each phase. At the time of graduation, a contest website was established, a brochure was under production and the contest was to be launched in early 2007.

**Team 2. Innovative Farmer Award Program 2006 (Terri Cline, Sarah Fanin-Holliday, Linda Hieneman, Barbara Howard, Dail Howard, Dennis Perry)**

The goal of this project was to increase public awareness of successful agri-entrepreneurs in Elliott, Greenup, Morgan and Rowan counties in eastern Kentucky. "The purpose of the 2006 Innovative Farmer Awards Program is to identify and recognize farmers who demonstrate the spirit of entrepreneurship while cultivating new farmer-to-farmer relationships" (Program Brochure). Through self- and other nominations, the program recognized 20 agri-entrepreneurs with a small financial award and gate sign that were presented at a banquet for the nominees at the KECI graduation seminar in November 2006.

**Team 3. The Nor-Easter: Taking the Region by Storm (Larry Brown, Charlotte Dixon, Toni Eddleman, Pati Porter, Karen Towles, Jennifer Vaden)**

The goal of this project was to stimulate interest in entrepreneurship and promote an entrepreneurial culture by developing a regional newspaper page and holding a writing/photography contest for youth. The project was successful in having one school participate in the writing contest (although their goal was to have more schools participate). The team plans to revamp this competition and reach out to schools again this year. At the time of the graduation seminar, the team was working on a template for the regional newspaper page and was soliciting news items from other KECI teams and individuals to feature on that page.

**Team 4. ArtsLink Mini-Grant (Robert Barker, Russ Conrad, Janet Pelfrey)**

The goal of this project was to increase support for artisans and organizations serving local artisans by developing a flexible grants process based on the unique needs of each artisan. The team held three regional meetings, focused on Carter, Bourbon, Boyd, Fleming, Lawrence, Martin, Montgomery, Nicholas, Pendleton, and Robertson counties, to raise awareness about the program. They also developed a seminar to help artisans and artists develop and understand their businesses. The team received 11 applications for funding and funding decisions were planned for January 2007. The team planned to follow up with grantees to help with project implementation.

**Team 5. Students Teaming for Entrepreneurial Progress – STEP (Eric Fagan, Jeremy Faulkner, Kathy Junker)**

The original goal for this project was to bring entrepreneurial education to high school students by teaching an entrepreneurship class in the high schools. However, the team discovered that their program was unrealistic given the constraints within the schools. Given their interest in promoting youth entrepreneurship and the connections team members have with particular youth organizations, such as 4H, these team members decided to support the Kentucky Youth Challenge 2007 with their time and mini-grant financial support.

**Team 6. Free Range Egg Mini-Grant Project (Scotty Mitchell, Billy Webb)**

The goal of this project was to develop entrepreneurs who would produce and sell free range eggs in the region. The plan was to provide the producers with the inputs they needed, including know-how and hens, to develop operations.

The marketing was handled by the team members. However, when the team held meetings in the region to encourage potential agri-entrepreneurs to take advantage of this opportunity, there was little support for the idea.

**Team 7. Targeting High School Youth (Kim Adams-Leger, Dorothy Altman, Gayle Todd, Larry Willis)**

The goal of this project was to establish a link between entrepreneurial organizations and resources in the region and high school youth. The plan was to create a partnership between area high schools, the mini-grant groups and other organizations such as Extension, Bluegrass Energy, and Community Ventures. A brochure was under development at the time of the November graduation seminar and the team planned to work closely with the Kentucky Youth Challenge team to publicize the competition. The team described the purpose of this project as "early seed planting".

## **Appendix F**

### **Evaluation Team Member Bios**

**Deborah M. Markley** is Managing Director and Director of Research for the Rural Policy Research Institute's Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, a national research and policy center. Her focus within the Center is practice-driven research and evaluation of best models for entrepreneurship development in rural places. Prior to her work with the Center, she was the Chair of the Rural Policy Research Institute's Equity Capital Initiative and completed a national study of nontraditional venture capital institutions. Deb's research has also included case studies of entrepreneurial support organizations, evaluation of state industrial extension programs, and consideration of the impacts of changing banking markets on small business finance. She has extensive experience conducting field-based survey research projects and has conducted focus groups and interviews with rural bankers, entrepreneurs, business service providers, venture capitalists, small manufacturers, and others. Her research has been presented in academic journals, as well as to national public policy organizations and Congressional committees. Deb received her PhD. in agricultural economics from Virginia Tech in 1984 and has held faculty and research positions at the University of Tennessee, the University of Massachusetts, and Purdue University.

**John Gruidl** is a Professor in the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University. John leads outreach and research projects in rural economic development. He directs the Midwest Community Development Institute, one of only five sites in the country that provides a certification program in the field of community development. He has published in the areas of new firm formation, retail trade, and local development policy. John also teaches courses in community economic development. John has created and directed several programs in rural development. From 1994-2005, he directed the award-winning Peace Corps Fellows Program in which returned Peace Corps volunteers enter a master's degree program at Western Illinois University. As part of their graduate training, the returned Peace Corps volunteers serve 11-month internships leading community development projects in rural Illinois communities. In the early 1990s, John helped to create the MAPPING the Future of Your Community, a strategic visioning program for Illinois communities. John is active with the Community Development Society where he serves as editor of Community Development Practice. He received a Ph.D. in Agricultural and Applied Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1989, with a major in the field of Community Economics.

**Ted Bradshaw** is a Professor in the Human and Community Development Department at University of California, Davis, where he teaches community and economic development, as well as serving as Chair of the Community

Development Graduate Group. He received his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, in Sociology (1972). His current research is on new local economic development strategies, the evaluation of the California Workforce Investment Act program, community development organizations, and the impact of the California energy crisis on the state economy. He has studied small business programs for several decades, most recently with an emphasis on Entrepreneurship. He recently completed an evaluation study of the economic impact of California's 39 enterprise zones, showing that they returned to the state more tax benefits than they cost. Ted is Editor of *COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Journal of the Community Development Society*, an academic journal that publishes articles on the theory and practice of community development. In addition he is the author of over 70 articles and reports on issues of local development, technology, and policy issues facing California.

**James R. Calvin** is currently Associate Professor of Management and Director of the Leadership Development Program (LDP) for Minority Managers at the Johns Hopkins University. He consults with Federal agencies, national and local foundations, nonprofits, and several national and international business organizations including Fannie Mae, General Electric and DaimlerChrysler. His applied leadership, management and organization practice is in the areas of executive and managerial coaching, learning for collaboration in organizations, diversity management, leadership and management development, and systemic organizational development. James conducts research in leadership and management practice, learning and culture, and global leadership and community transformation. He serves on several organization boards including the Academy of Management Membership Committee (AoM) and the Executive Board of the International Society for the Advancement of Management (SAM). James earned a B.F.A. from the Rochester Institute of Technology. His M.A. and Ph.D. (with distinction) with a concentration in phenomenology, culture and communication are from New York University.