A Progress Report on the Business Success Program

A program for growing successful businesses in rural Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

June 2012 through September 2013

First 6 Months **01/12 through 06/12**	*6 – 15 Months of Operation* **07/12 through 03/13**	*16 – 21 Months* **04/13 – 09/13**
Program Start Up *Partnerships Formed* *Program Finalized* *Business Coach Hired*	**Program Implementation** *Community Outreach & Engagement* *Coaching Services Provided* *Early Development Impacts*	**Accelerating Impact** *13 of 14 Communities Engaged* *51 Clients* *Impact Stories*

A Short History on Business Success

Business Success is a program for growing successful businesses in rural Pottawattamie County, Iowa. This economic development initiative began in January 2012 with major funding from the Iowa West Foundation. From January through June of 2012, work focused on designing and organizing a team, hiring a business coach and building the **Business Success** Program. By mid-summer of 2012, work with rural communities and businesses in Pottawattamie County began in earnest. *This report effectively covers impacts achieved by **Business Success** from June 2012 through September 2013.*

Sponsors

Business Success is made possible by the Pottawattamie County HomeTown Competiveness Initiative (HTC) with major funding by the Iowa West Foundation and organizational support from Iowa Western Community College, the Western Iowa Development Association and the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship.

What is Business Success?

Business Success is driven by a business coach who will come to your home or business, sit down and listen in order to help you network to solutions that can help you achieve your fullest business potential. To make this program even better, it is offered for FREE thanks to Western Iowa Development Association (WIDA) and Iowa Western Community College (Office of Economic & Workforce Development) with funding from the Iowa West Foundation through the HTC Initiative. Business Coaching is a demonstrated method for helping new and existing businesses realize greater success. So, how is **Business Success** doing after 15 months of work? Check out these indicators of progress and impact.

93% of Communities Engaged

Rural Pottawattamie County is comprised of a great deal of countryside and 14 communities (Honey Creek, Neola, Minden, Avoca, Walnut, Crescent, Weston, Underwood, McClelland, Oakland, Hancock, Treynor, Carson, Carter Lake & Macedonia). We are pleased to report that we have business clients in 13 of the 14 communities (93% or up from 12 villages in the last report). This Program is leveraging SCORE dollars that have allowed our business coaching services to go regional with clients now in Council Bluffs, Omaha, Harlan, LaVista, Hamburg and Griswold. Thanks to the great work of Lori Holste with WIDA, the community of Carter Lake is now part of our **Business Success Program**.

55 Plus Referral Partners

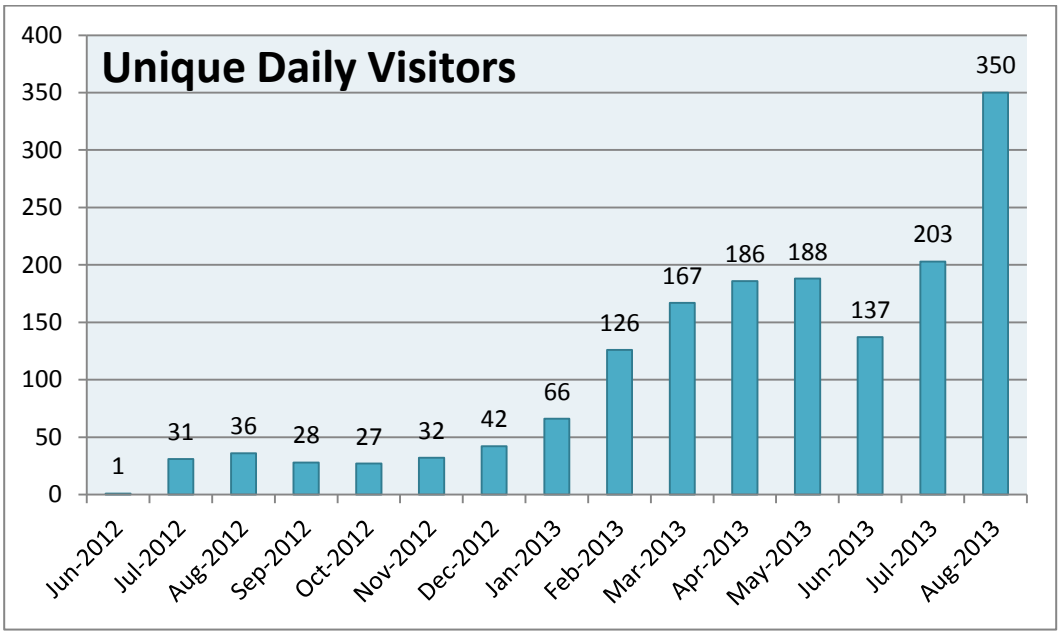
A key to **Business Success** is community-based business referral partners. These partners are municipal clerks, bankers, chamber leaders, ministers and others who help connect businesses wanting assistance to our Program. At the end of September, we have 55 referral partners (up from 44 at the last report) located in 13 different communities. Every week, new potential clients are referred to **Business Success** by this growing network of business referral partners.

51 Business Clients

In our last report, we identified 31 business clients. Today, we have 51 clients with new clients being added every week. This represents a 65% increase in the number of business clients (not counting those using our web resource, *Tools for Business Success*). This very strong progress illustrates the increasing network of referral partners, word of mouth recommendations and engagement by the communities in rural Pottawattamie County. Breakout of our current clients includes the following:

• Existing Businesses Seeking to Grow	18	35%
• New Business Start Ups	13	25%
• Existing Businesses that are Struggling	11	22%
• Existing Business Retention	4	8%
• New Business Attractions	3	6%
• Business Transitions to New Owners	2	4%

Of our 51 clients, 3 entrepreneurs have decided to quit business.



350 Use Tools for Business Success

Tools for Business Success provides a comprehensive collection of online business development tools. See it here: http://wida.toolsforbusiness.info. When launched in June 2012, our *Tools for Business Success* web-based assistance center had just one visitor per day. By March 2013, we were up to 167 visitors per day. In August, we increased visitation by 110% to 350 visitors per day. For many entrepreneurs, their first stop is the Internet. The *Tools* resource and the WIDA website provide one more way to connect with and serve entrepreneurs in rural Pottawattamie County.

SCORE TAKES OFF

John Adams, our Program's Business Coach, is also tasked with building a stronger SCORE (Senior Corps of Retired Executives) Chapter for Pottawattamie County and the region served by Iowa Western Community College. SCORE is a program of the U.S. Small Business Administration that matches seasoned entrepreneurs with entrepreneurs who could benefit from a mentor. Significant progress is being realized to grow this SCORE resource. For many entrepreneurs, the most effective assistance is a mentor who can work one on one. This is a great example of the **entrepreneurial support system** being developed by our program.

Impact Stories

We are committed to honestly documenting our program's impact. In addition to detailed tracking of communities engaged, entrepreneurial clients and economic development impacts, we are also gathering testimonials and stories on entrepreneurs. To date we have completed three stories and we have an additional three in production. These stories highlight the diverse entrepreneurial talent in rural Pottawattamie County, how our system of support is helping them and lessons shared with other entrepreneurs.



David Jacobson – Papa Jake's BBQ

What started out as a gift from his daughters turned into a thriving business in Pottawattamie County for Dave Jacobson. With the motivation to produce top-of-the-line meat and help from the Western Iowa Development Association, **Papa Jake's BBQ** took off.



Susan Kruse – Caption Throw Down

She is a nurse, part of a large extended family that loves games and she is an unlikely, likely entrepreneur. She has created a new game for families called **Caption Throw Down**. She is an unlikely entrepreneur given her career as a nurse, but deep at heart Susan is a genuine entrepreneur . **Dixie Moo Games** is her second entrepreneurial venture.



Lynn Driver – Emma Jeans

Lynn is in his 50s and has done a lot of different things to make a living over his working life. But like many entrepreneurs we are supporting, Lynn wants to live in Pottawattamie County and he continues to return to being his own boss. His new entrepreneurial venture is **Emma Jeans Restaurant and Lounge** located at I-80 near Walnut.

Other stories are unfolding as you read this. Each story demonstrates that having a business coach who can work one on one with area entrepreneurs accelerates business development and economic development impacts. John Adams, our Business Coach, takes time to reach out, listen and help entrepreneurs find the resources (both public and private) that can make the difference between success and failure. Some of the other stories taking shape are…

Main Street Renewal	Community Wide Effort	Growth Business
We have an emerging story of communities in rural Pottawattamie County where main streets are being renewed with successful businesses. Stay tuned…	There is a community that is on fire with ideas and initiatives that could greatly enhance its success. We are listening and connecting it to resources. Stay tuned…	Over 1 in 3 of our clients are existing businesses that want to grow. Many are focused on reaching external markets. One has the potential to create 50 jobs. Stay tuned…

Resources Engaged – A network of business services!

A key to **Business Success** is networking a business to the right resource, at the right time and at the right price. There are a growing number of local, regional and external business development services that are now helping rural Pottawattamie businesses. In our year-end report, we will document all the various resource providers, both public and private, that have worked with area businesses. Business Coaching functions as a concierge that links client entrepreneurs to the right resource at the right time. This important service makes the most of the entrepreneur's time and effort, but also makes sure that resource providers, whether a local bank or the area's Small Business Development Center, are effectively and efficiently used.



John Adams, Pottawattamie County Business Coach

Economic Development Impacts

We are still relatively early in this effort, but there is growing evidence that **Business Success** is contributing to new investment, jobs creation and expansion of both local property and sales tax bases. Later this year, we will begin publishing estimates of the collective impact on investment, jobs and tax base of the Pottawattamie County **Business Success** Program.

It Takes a Community!

Business development and economic development happen most every day as individuals make decisions to open, expand and even close businesses. We know that development programs can accelerate business development by creating a PRO-BUSINESS climate and support system. No single organization or agency has all the answers that can help businesses be more successful. IT DOES TAKE AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY! In rural Pottawattamie County, something really inspiring is happening. Communities, funders, business service providers, area development resources and even resources outside the county are working together to provide businesses real support and help. Now, at the end of the day, success or failure is owned by the business person, but we also know that the **Business Success Program** is accelerating business development and making a real difference.

This Performance Report

This performance report was prepared by Don Macke with the national Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. For questions regarding this report and its contents, contact Don at 402.323.7336 or don@e2mail.org.

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IOWA WESTERN

Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
energizing entrepreneurial communities

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