

Entre-WHAT? Business Basics for Arkansas Youth

Entre-WHAT? Business Basics for Arkansas Youth was initiated as a means of supporting rural economic development by facilitating the creation of a pipeline of Arkansas entrepreneurs for the future. The program is being developed through a partnership between Extension's Community and Economic Development and 4-H Youth Development. The primary goal of *Entre-WHAT?* is to provide a fun and engaging experiential program to:

1. Introduce Arkansas youth to the exciting opportunities that entrepreneurship offers.
2. Provide Arkansas youth with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to determine if starting and growing a business is right for them, now or in the future.
3. Establish a support system for Arkansas youth entrepreneurs.
4. Attract new youth to Arkansas 4-H.

Curriculum

The following curriculum components are currently available and being used throughout the state:

- *Introductory Program:* The *Entre-WHAT?* introductory program curriculum consists of five 50-60 minute sessions. It is a hands-on experience where participants come up with an idea for a business, develop a basic business plan, create their product and/or a marketing scheme, sell their product or service to fellow participants, and determine if their business was profitable. The program is targeted to 4th and 5th graders and can be conducted in the classroom, as an after-school program or in a camp setting.
- *Entrepreneur Camp:* Entrepreneur camp is a statewide two-day camp held at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center. Modeled after the *Entre-WHAT?* introductory program, the camp combines entrepreneurship education with the camp experience. Other life skills taught include communication, decision-making, teamwork, learning, relationships, management and understanding self. Target age for this program is youth, ages 9–12.
- *Entrepreneurship Education Activities:* A series of activities have been developed that can be used as a one time event or sequence of activities for leadership groups, existing 4-H groups, school enrichment programs or other purposes. Activities are available for youth of different ages. Activities focus on topics such as generating entrepreneurial ideas, civic entrepreneurship, exploring characteristics, business planning, effective advertising, market research, opportunity cost, record keeping and financial analysis.

Anticipated Outcomes

The program theory underlying *Entre-WHAT?* is that engaging youth in experiential entrepreneurial education will create more awareness among youth about entrepreneurship as a career choice and result in better-prepared business owners, employees, and entrepreneurs in the future. Spillover effects with regard to adults may also arise, including more adults seeking information and education about entrepreneurship as well as increased awareness and support of local entrepreneurs by community leaders and public officials. In aggregate, these effects should lead to a stronger economy for the State of Arkansas.

In order to facilitate the development of an effective evaluation strategy, a program logic model has been developed. Several short, medium, and long-term outcomes have been identified through this process. Short-term outcomes focus on knowledge gained as a result of the program and increased awareness among youth and adults about the potential of entrepreneurship as a career path. Medium-term outcomes include active participation in educational programming as well as increased support for youth entrepreneurs from local communities. Long-term outcomes include an increase in entrepreneurial activity by youth and adults as well as solicitation of additional education to enhance entrepreneurial skills.

Program Success Stories

Since June 2007, over 150 youth have participated in components of the *Entre-WHAT?* program. Evaluation results, measured through pre- and post-tests, have been positive and demonstrate increased knowledge of concepts related to entrepreneurship and business development. Over 80 percent of youth participants surveyed indicate that they would consider being an entrepreneur and would like to learn more about entrepreneurship.

Other positive impacts are being observed as well. After camp in February 2008, one 4-H leader shared the following:

I just wanted to pass on to you that I had 6 kids from my club at the entrepreneurship camp and they all had a great time. One of the girls is very shy and I was worried about her. She did great and was one of the group that designed the t-shirt. At our next club meeting and since, she has talked more than she ever has. Even my daughter Molly commented about it on the way home how much Meagan had talked at that meeting. They were all very excited about the things they learned and had a great time.

Reports of entrepreneurial activity have also emerged. At a program in Dallas County in August 2007, one youth developed a business plan for a lawn care businesses. In spring 2008, with the help of his parents, he purchased a commercial Exmark lawn mower and has begun his business. After the state camp in 2008, a county Extension agent shared news of another business venture:

Just thought I'd let you know that the young man from Searcy County who attended the 4-H entrepreneur camp last month came back and started a small venture. He has opened a booth at a local flea market & is the youngest exhibitor/seller. He said he really loved the camp and is very excited.

Planned Program Expansions & Enhancements

The success of initial *Entre-WHAT?* program features has resulted in demand from county Extension agents, youth, and parents for additional activities and curricula. In addition, members of the business community have expressed an interest in supporting the program. As a result, several program expansions are planned including: competitive and noncompetitive activities, additional curricula, a website featuring learning opportunities and a spotlight on youth entrepreneurs in Arkansas, individualized entrepreneur support, and youth entrepreneurship education partnerships.