



THREE RURAL DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS STORIES

I. Maryland Capital Enterprises

Outline of Need:

Maryland's Eastern Shore has fewer large-scale businesses and employers than elsewhere in the state, which makes operating a small business is an attractive alternative to generate income. While resources for small business owners exist, they generally target potential business owners with more capital and bigger plans than some area entrepreneurs are likely to amass. Therefore, a need existed for "micro-business" assistance, i.e., for businesses employing five or fewer employees.

How Rural Development Helped:

The Rural Development Center at the University of Maryland, using USDA Rural Development funds, worked to establish and oversee operations at Maryland Capital Enterprises (MCE), which now offers micro-loans, seminars, and networking opportunities to help move ideas off the drawing board and into reality. MCE's website is http://www.skipjack.net/le_shore/mce/.

The Results:

Small businesses that have received help and been successful include a child care provider, a charter boat operator, and a soap and toiletries manufacturer. See <http://www.skipjack.net/article.asp?StoryID=11> for a feature article describing MCE and its impact.

2. MD Hawk Corporation

Outline of Need:

The Rural Development Center (RDC) at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) was experiencing difficulties working with partners in the private sector in instances where the need to move quickly (e.g., to negotiate leases, licenses, royalty agreements, etc.) was slowed by bureaucratic processes of state government that sometimes meant property or project opportunities would be long gone before permission to proceed was granted. UMES needed a separate, private non-profit entity chartered to work nimbly on such projects, generating revenue for the university's benefit. The existence of such entities at public universities in the U. S. is not uncommon.

How Rural Development Helped:

The RDC, working with the Maryland Attorney General and supported by USDA Rural Development funds, created the Maryland Hawk Corporation, Inc., a university-affiliated foundation 501 (c) (3) non profit organization focused on the commercialization and entrepreneurial development of intellectual property developed at the UMES. Revenues from royalties, dividends, leases, licenses, and other commercial activities will be used to support the administrative function of the organization with excess revenues targeted to support the mission of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. See the Maryland Hawk Corporation's website at <http://www.mdhawk.org/>.

The Results:

- i. Farmers Access to Regional Markets (FARMS[®]) uses a network model to create links between new and inexperienced farmers (as well as farmers seeking to diversify their operations and reduce risk) with established agri-businesses who handle the product marketing. See details at <http://www.skipjack.net/farms/>.

- ii. F2FNET a Farmer to Farmer Internet Management Database for USAID funded NGO Development Projects and SOAR System for Online Academic Reporting MIS database and reporting software development
- iii. Caribbean Development Institute (CDI) with Citizen Development Corps (CDC)
- iv. Coastal Environmental Lab Incubator Development
- v. Somerset Hall It Spec/Incubator Building Project
- vi. Jamaica Farmers Access to Regional Markets (JAFARMS) project, USAID GDA project. Related to Item i, above. See <http://www.skipjack.net/farms/> for details.
- vii. Riv River Belize Development Project
- viii. Avi Home Poultry Industry and Poultry House Modernization Venture
- ix. Swales Aerospace Faculty Development Project
- x. Hawk Institute for Space Sciences

3. Skipjack.net

Outline of Need:

The use of the internet by both the private and non-profit sectors for advertising, marketing, and other external and internal communication was relatively slow to take root on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The Rural Development Center (RDC) at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) sought to "jump-start" this development by a) demonstrating the internet's potential for rapid, inexpensive information dissemination and b) supporting the fledgling efforts of select organizations and companies in the region.

How Rural Development Helped:

With funds provided by USDA Rural Development, the RDC created Skipjack.net, "Your unique portal to Maryland's Eastern Shore." See <http://skipjack.net> . Select organizations and companies were urged to become members of the "Skipjack.net network" to be listed on and linked to Skipjack.net. Those who chose to become network members had their graphic design and hosting services costs underwritten with Rural Development funds. Network members were encouraged to keep their sites up-to-date and the RDC provided funds for modest improvements to the sites. An editor for Skipjack.net was hired with RDC funds to develop and update the main page, develop and organize additional links, and communicate with network members to encourage and support their efforts. With the introduction of a monthly feature article posted on Skipjack's main page and a monthly e-newsletter to Skipjack.net members announcing the arrival of each month's feature, members were encouraged to return to the main page regularly and keep their own sites current.

The Results:

Skipjack.net now exists as a robust and useful compilation of sites and information about the work of the Rural Development Center and those businesses and organizations it has worked to enhance (<http://skipjack.net>) . An archive of high-quality articles with photographs and illustrations about Maryland's Eastern Shore -- written with an orientation towards those interested in economic and tourism development -- has been created and is prominently featured on the site (http://www.skipjack.net/article_all.asp). Network member sites (accessed from the main page) are numerous and easy to find. As network members' familiarity with website management matured, some have moved to their own servers and/or developed more complicated sites for which they are taking full responsibility.