

CREATE BRIDGES:

Celebrating **R**etail, **A**ccommodations,
Tourism, and **E**ntertainment by

Building **R**ural **I**nnovations and **D**eveloping **G**rowth **E**conomies



Kentucky Application

About the CREATE BRIDGES Initiative: While manufacturing and professional services are often the focus of economic development, businesses focused on retail, accommodations, tourism and entertainment are important to the viability of rural communities and regions. These industries provide needed goods, services and amenities to local residents and visitors and enhance quality of life. They are a major source of jobs and tax revenue in rural communities. They often provide the first work experience for residents who move up the career path within these businesses or go on to work in other sectors.

Currently, planning and training focused on these sectors is often neglected or underemphasized despite a need to strengthen it. As a result, small and large businesses alike face high worker turnover rates and a dwindling pool of mid/upper management workers. The CREATE BRIDGES initiative was launched to develop and test a process to fill this void, particularly in rural areas. The process is designed to raise awareness of the role these important businesses play in the local economy, determine challenges and barriers negatively impacting those businesses, and develop and implement strategies to strengthen the retail, accommodations, tourism, and entertainment sectors within a region.

Focus: In the CREATE BRIDGES process, we will focus on those businesses related to *retail, accommodations, tourism, and entertainment*. Throughout this document, "CREATE businesses" refer to these four types of businesses.

Purpose: The purpose of the CREATE BRIDGES Initiative is to build the capacity of rural regions to strengthen the CREATE businesses.

National Project Partners: The CREATE BRIDGES Initiative is a partnership among the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), University of Kentucky's Community & Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK), University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service's Community and Economic Development (UACES-CED), and Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service with funding made available through Walmart.

Eligible States/Regions: Regions located in Arkansas, Kentucky and Oklahoma are invited to apply for the CREATE BRIDGES Initiative. One two-to-five county pilot region will be selected from each state to participate.

To qualify for this program, a region must be classified as rural and economically distressed as defined below:

- **Definition of Rural Region:** The region must encompass two to five contiguous counties (with some exceptions for Tribal areas) and the total population and/or geographic area of the region must meet the following requirements: at least 51% rural in nature. Regions may cross state boundaries as long as the counties that make up that multi-state region meet the rural requirement.

For purposes of this application, rural refers to counties that are classified as non-urban. Links to data sources to assist you can be found on the following SRDC web site:

http://srdc.msstate.edu/createbridges/data_resources.html

- **Definition of Economically Distressed:** A region is considered economically distressed if it meets one of the following requirements: (1) The poverty rate for the region is at or above the state average; OR (2) The region has high unemployment or low labor force participation rates relative to the state average. Links to data sources to assist you can be found on the following SRDC web site:

http://srdc.msstate.edu/createbridges/data_resources.html

What will happen if my region is selected to participate in the CREATE BRIDGES Initiative? A team of professionals coordinated by the National Project Partners will work closely with your region over the next two years using a multi-pronged approach. Major steps in this process will include:

- Form a Regional Steering Committee with representation from each of the CREATE BRIDGES targeted business sectors, state/local workforce agencies, chambers of commerce, economic development, education, and local government.
- Conduct an Inventory of CREATE businesses and existing training programs in your region that can support these businesses.
- Host a Retail Academy to increase understanding of the interdependence of CREATE BRIDGES sectors and the rest of the economy, begin exploring workforce and other challenges shared between these businesses and the rest of the economy, and build support for the initiative.
- Facilitate collaboration of existing efforts that can help strengthen CREATE businesses.
- Implement a Business Retention and Expansion Program to survey local CREATE businesses, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the business environment, and set priorities for action to help these businesses thrive and grow.
- Develop and implement new strategies and actions to strengthen the CREATE business sector in your region.

How to Apply: Complete the attached Application Form and submit it by 5:00 p.m. local time on August 3, 2018. You will receive an acknowledgement of your application within two business days. We urge all applicants to contact us immediately if they have not received an acknowledgement within this time period.

As part of the application you will be asked to demonstrate:

- Description of the region: Why the proposed counties make sense as a region, providing a description of the driving forces that draw them together to focus on the CREATE business sectors.
- Evidence that the rural and economically distressed criteria are met: How the region qualifies as rural and economically distressed based on the definitions above and data from the region.
- Evidence of working together: Previous experience the proposed counties have working together as a region, or if the region has not worked together previously, the region's current capacity to work together.

- Stakeholder Buy-in: Commitment that key stakeholders in the region are ready to work through the process to determine place-based solutions to strengthen CREATE businesses. Key stakeholders include, but are not limited to, regional/local workforce agencies, chambers of commerce, economic development, education, and local government.
- Evidence that CREATE businesses are a workforce or economic development priority for the region

Selection Process: All applications will be carefully reviewed on the state level, led by the State Lead from the National Project Team, and working in collaboration with relevant state agencies. The State Lead may contact applicants in order to conduct site visits and a tour with representatives of your group. Once the state evaluation is complete the National Project Partner Team will review the pool of finalists and make the final decision regarding the region in each state that will be invited to participate in this CREATE BRIDGES pilot program. This announcement will be made by August 31, 2018.

How Proposals Will Be Scored: All proposals will be scored on a **100 points basis**. The following details the maximum amount of points associated with each component of the CREATE BRIDGES application.

Proposals from regions that do not meet the definition for Rural and Economically Distressed will not be considered.

Please note that incomplete proposals will not be scored.

	<u>Maximum Points Possible</u>
Description of the region	25
Evidence of working together	25
Stakeholder buy-in	25
Evidence that CREATE businesses are a priority for the region	25
TOTAL POINTS	100

Questions?

If you have any questions, please contact:

Alison Davis, Kentucky Project Director
Alison.Davis@uky.edu
 (859) 257-7260

CEDIK
 Community and Economic
 Development Initiative of Kentucky
cedik.ca.uky.edu



**APPLICATION FORM
CREATE BRIDGES Initiative**

Deadline for Applications: August 3, 2018, 5:00 p.m. Local Time
Please Complete All Sections of the Application Form and email to:
Alison Davis, Kentucky Project Director
Alison.Davis@uky.edu (859) 257-7260

Part 1: Region and Contact Information

- a. Region Name (if no formal name exists, just provide a name that best describes the geographic area of your regional group):

NOTE: For purposes of this application, a region is defined as an area that encompasses two to five counties that are contiguous to one another.

- b. List the counties included in your region: _____

- c. Main contact person for your region: _____

- d. Email address: _____

- e. Telephone number: _____

- f. Mailing address:

Part 2: Description of the Region (250 word limit)

Provide an overview of your region and why you are applying to participate in the CREATE BRIDGES Initiative. Here are the types of information you might include in your description:

- What cities and counties are included in your region?
- How are CREATE businesses distributed in the region? Is there a central hub(s) where these businesses are located, or are they spread throughout the region?
- What are some of the opportunities and challenges associated with CREATE businesses in your region?

Part 3: Evidence the Rural and Economically Distressed Criteria are Met (250 word limit)

Provide a brief description of how your region qualifies as rural and economically distressed according to the definitions provided in this application. Use data available from the counties in your region to support this claim. Links to data sources to assist you can be found on the following SRDC web site:

http://srdc.msstate.edu/createbridges/data_resources.html

Part 4: Evidence of Working Together (250 word limit)

Briefly describe your regional team's past history of working together on community or economic development issues. In addition to describing the nature of collaborative efforts, you may want to address the following questions:

- What have been your successes, if any?
- What have been your challenges or barriers, if any?
- What partners have been involved in past collaborative efforts?
- If your region has no history of working together, what barriers have prevented efforts to collaborate in the past and how might these be addressed during this process?
- What evidence can you provide that the region has capacity to work through this process together?

Part 5: Stakeholder Buy-in

Please provide the names of the individuals and their respective organization/agency affiliations that have agreed to be part of your regional team. More effective regional teams include representation from many different types of entities. Applications with broad representation will score higher. ALSO, a **signed commitment letter** from each person on your team that states that he/she has agreed **(1) to actively participate** in the CREATE BRIDGES initiative and **(2) to honor the commitments** stated below must be included with this application.

Name of Regional Team Member	Primary Organization/Agency the Person Represents	Have Commitment Letter from this Person?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

(Feel free to attach a separate sheet if needed to add more Regional Team members)

Commitment letters should include a willingness to participate in these activities:

- Serve on Regional Steering Committee
- Assist with inventory of CREATE businesses and existing training programs in your region that can support these businesses.
- Participate in a Retail Academy to increase understanding of the interdependence of the CREATE businesses and the rest of the economy, begin exploring workforce and other challenges shared between the CREATE businesses and the rest of the economy, and build support for the initiative.
- Facilitate collaboration of existing efforts that can help strengthen these businesses.
- Assist with Business Retention and Expansion Program to survey local CREATE businesses, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the business environment, and set priorities for action to help these businesses thrive and grow.
- Help develop and implement new strategies and actions to strengthen the CREATE business sector in your region.

Part 6: Evidence that CREATE Businesses are a Workforce or Economic Development Priority for the Region (400 word limit)

What are the key economic drivers in your region and the role of CREATE businesses in your regional economy? How are these sectors inter-related to other industries in the region? Include any data evidence that demonstrates your region’s economic dependence on these industries. Links to data sources to assist you can be found on the following SRDC web site: http://srdc.msstate.edu/createbridges/data_resources.html

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