

### Organizational Background:

Craven Community College is a public, two-year college located in eastern North Carolina and established in 1967. The College opened an office aboard Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in 1973. The 24-acre Havelock campus opened for classes in January 2004 and now houses several programs. The College is a progressive educational entity that offers programs and services that reflect the diverse needs of the community it serves. Career development, transfer, remediation, workforce training, and student development are all components that make the Craven experience unique. The college also offers many associate degree, diploma and certificate options, particularly in its technical programs.

Craven Community College is located in Craven County that is 712 square miles at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers on the North Carolina coast. There are 104,147 residents, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, living within the county's 8 municipalities. Craven County and its contiguous counties were traditionally large tobacco-producing counties. Unemployment and higher than average numbers of residents living below the poverty level continue to plague the area due to the loss of income and farm-related jobs during the past four decades. Still primarily rural in nature, Craven County (16.1%) poverty rates are significant among counties in eastern North Carolina. The region's largest urban area and the county seat for Craven, New Bern realizes 23.8% of residents living below the poverty level.

Craven County Government adopted a comprehensive economic development strategic plan in 2013. This plan is a proactive approach to enhance economic development activities to grow the local economy. The economic development goals are 1) to diversify the County's industry base; 2) to target industries that match the labor pool; 3) to increase civilian job opportunities; 4) to be more competitive statewide for business attraction; 5) to encourage the creation of jobs earning above \$40,000; 6) to create a business climate that minimizes regulatory obstacles; 7) to provide a quality workforce and workforce/education programs; 8) to enhance the sustainability of local military operations; 8) to grow existing businesses; and 9) to foster entrepreneurialism. The objectives are 1) to identify and recruit new businesses; 2) to establish a formal program to facilitate retention and growth for existing businesses; 3) to develop real estate asset capital projects; and 4) to enhance school to career pathways. Another accomplishment is the launching of a new website, [www.cravenbusiness.com](http://www.cravenbusiness.com), designed specifically to help attract new businesses to Craven County and to support local entrepreneurs. The site features information on key employers within the county, workforce training, transportation options and the value of doing business in Craven County.

### Background of Management Team

**Alex Frelier - Small Business Center Director and Program Contact, [freliera@cravencc.edu](mailto:freliera@cravencc.edu), 252-638-1088.** He has extensive experience assisting entrepreneurs in the process of starting and running their businesses. He has personally started several businesses and has a special interest in enterprises that support underserved communities. He provides the programmatic leadership for the Small Business Center at Craven Community College planning workshops and seminars to educate the entrepreneurial community. Alex serves on the Board of the New Bern Chamber of Commerce and holds a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Accountancy. **Leigh Anne Friesen – Administrative Assistant.** She is the lead staff of WIBO Works!, a "Workshop in Business Opportunities", offering training resources since the 1960s to help underserved populations, including the formerly incarcerated, start and Grow a Profitable Business. Additionally, she is involved with offering technical assistance to local communities and small business owners. **Greg Singleton-Workforce Readiness Director.** He is chairman of Craven Pamlico Reentry Council. He has developed and implemented transition programs to assist ex-offenders assimilate to the general public and has established strong connections with nonprofit and charitable organizations in the community.

## Entrepreneurial Education Delivery Solution

### Participant Recruitment Plan

The participants will be identified from the partnerships with the Craven Pamlico Reentry Council, NC Workforce Solutions Employment Agency and other organizations that assist individuals in securing employment. In the last six to eight months the Craven Pamlico Reentry Council has processed 94 individuals that are formerly incarcerated. Knowing that employment is difficult to secure with a prior criminal record many formerly incarcerated individuals desire to start a small business. In particular, this county and region has a great entrepreneurial spirit with many small business in the area. Individuals will also be identified prior to release scheduled 12 to 18 months in the Craven County Correctional Institute and Craven County Detention Center. Individuals will be identified from the Cognitive Behavioral Intervention course and from the Keys to Freedom course that assists those incarcerated on how to re-enter into society with a changed mindset, goal setting, and communication skills. The program will be marketed in the local media, newspaper, social media and community announcement boards.

### Classroom Instruction

The Small Business Center (SBC) is the networking hub for the small businesses located in Craven County (<https://cravencc.edu/sbc/>). The center provides a convenient location on campus for businesses to network through the Roundtables held monthly. They also provide counseling services to the business on topics such as finance, marketing, business plan development and accounting. The director, Alex Frelie, regularly attends business community functions held by the agencies with the community to determine how the department and the college can assist them better during economically challenging times.

The SBC is a part of the Workforce Development Unit of the college. The college has provided various courses for individuals in the local correctional facility. Cognitive Behavior Intervention, Keys to Freedom, Horticulture, Veterinary Training and GED courses. The Entrepreneurial courses will be a new addition to course selection. Courses have been provided for formerly incarcerated individuals through partnerships with local organizations, such as Wash Away Unemployment ([www.washawayunemployment.org](http://www.washawayunemployment.org)) and Craven Pamlico Reentry Council ([www.cpreentry.org](http://www.cpreentry.org)), assisting individuals in obtaining employment and employability readiness. Craven Community College has reputable academic programs that assist individuals in obtaining employment in the workforce and transfer to universities. The SBC currently holds an Entrepreneurial Series throughout the year outlined in the Small Business Center Network of North Carolina. The core seminars will be a part of the curriculum delivered to the 2 cohorts for those currently incarcerated at Craven Correctional Institute/Detention Center, formerly incarcerated and those with criminal records. Each course is 3 hours in length and can be completed in 12 weeks. At the conclusion of the core courses a certificate of completion will be issued to each participant. The courses will guide participants to explore their personal entrepreneurial interests and visions and model its tasks and challenges. Through the course work and personal counseling participants will be guided to refine and draft a complete business plan. The following core seminars accompanied with online resources on registration, insurance, planning and permits will address topics to assist participants in facilitating a start-up business.

Leadership Development- Learn about moral principles that govern behavior. Identify core values and how it defines professional and personal standards. Create personal and professional goals and how to prioritize to accomplish them. Learn best practices for time management, networking and effective communication skills.

How to Start a Business-Understand the basics of starting a business that take the participant from idea to opportunity. Participants will learn key strategies for start-up, financing and marketing as well as important information about legal issues, licensing, zoning, operations, and more. Participants will learn the importance of self-assessment and how to evaluate the feasibility of a business idea.

Financing Your Small Business- Explore the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of funding sources and how to choose the right one for specific needs. Include the procedures of microlending and its sources through NC Rural. Discussion in detail of the business loan checklist will be offered.

How to Write a Business Plan-Turn ideas into a solid plan for financing and long-term success. Learn important components of business plans that lay the foundation for a winning plan. Learn interrelations of marketing,

operations, and finance. Learn how a business plan is used by potential lenders, the dos and don'ts of writing a plan and steps for making the process easy.

How to Find Your Customers-Develop a focused and effective marketing plan using up to date market analysis. Discover the variety of market research tools that will give critical information about industry and customers. Get the data needed to test the feasibility of a new business, find the competition and potential customers interested in the proposed product or service.

Basics of Bookkeeping-Gain a workable knowledge of how to properly record financial transactions for business. Discover the three most important financial reports and how to use them to make the best informed business decisions.

Your Small Business Taxes- Gain a solid understanding of taxes required for small business owners and develop the best tax strategy for your business. Become familiar with the latest forms and procedures for both state and federal taxes. Discover how everyday business decisions can have tax implications that can affect your bottom line.

Marketing Your Business-Discover how to most effectively and efficiently use the many marketing tools available. Gain insights to understand and reach the customer, analyze industry and business environment and differentiate between branding, advertising, and grassroots marketing techniques. Explore the components of an effective marketing plan.

### **Mentoring**

The SBC will provide individual support to participants through confidential business consultation given by the director. Each counseling session is set up by appointment and the mentor discusses the business issues in detail from financing, credit repair, business loans and suggestions in their business plans. They provide one on one support and business guidance in meeting the challenges and responsibilities of entrepreneurship. Once individuals are released from correctional facilities they will be able to continue to participate in SBC network and consultation.

### **Community Connections**

The Craven County community already has small business owner connections through the Small Business Center's network, New Bern Chamber of Commerce, Havelock Chamber of Commerce and the future Craven County Entrepreneurial Center (business incubator) for startups. The City of New Bern and Craven Community College have secured a 1.3 million EDA grant to create a training center and business maker space. The college partners with a few local organizations that assist the unemployed and underemployed to obtain employment readiness skills and educational training. The Craven Pamlico Reentry Council has established an intake process and a means to connect with formerly incarcerated to housing, clothing, training, counseling once inmates are released. The Uptown Business and Professionals Association's ([www.uptownbpa.org](http://www.uptownbpa.org)) Learn and Earn program assist individuals in obtaining educational training in preparation for GED testing and obtaining work experience located in the heart of the county's most impoverished area with high crime and low educational attainment. Another organization entitled Wash Away Unemployment has participants enrolled in jobs for life classes and assigned a mentor to assist in transitioning into society and the workforce. The college and its partners frequently encounter participants that have formerly been incarcerated or have a criminal record that oftentimes find it impossible to secure employment. The services currently exist and the local business community and social services providers are marketing their programs directly to those in need and closing the gaps between agencies. A Choice New Bern (<http://choicenewbern.com/>) transformation plan was created as a result of HUD grant funding in 2016. One of the objectives for the Choice Neighborhood area is to support community wide wealth creation through employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for community residents and contracting opportunities for local businesses.

The community is comprised of small and large businesses, including farming operations. Leaders representing economic development entities have collaborated to develop The Entrepreneur Center of Craven County (TEC3) and The Cube. TEC3's goal is to expand the economy by stimulating entrepreneurship and business growth, ultimately, increasing the number of jobs and reducing unemployment numbers in the region. A thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem sustaining economic growth will be created through TEC3 and The Cube.

## **Access to Capital**

### Access to microlending:

During the Financing Your Small Business core course, microlending will be addressed. In particular, those microloans through North Carolina Rural Center and the Small Business Administration (SBA) North Carolina District. The NC Rural Center will be the primary agency presented in detail for they have the NC Microenterprise Loan Program with standard loans in amounts up to \$25,000 and Express loans of \$5,000 that are decided upon within 5 business days. The Microenterprise Loan Program's goal is to increase job opportunities and wealth creation, both often in short supply in rural communities. Loans are provided for individuals with sound ideas for start-ups or small business expansion but may not qualify for bank loans. Barry Ryan, Senior Program Director of the NC Rural Center, in conjunction with Alex Frelief, will assist in providing information on various networks to link individuals to others across the state and with service providers.

### Connection to capital and funding opportunities:

- SBA North Carolina District based in nearby cities such as Raleigh and Wilmington has access to the following types of loans: SBA Express Loans, Community Advantage, Microloans, Intermediary Lending Pilot, CAPLines and SBA Veterans Advantage. There are 100 plus lending agencies serving North Carolina and online data can be accessed from the SBA website. Individuals in the program will be introduced to these sources in the classroom and through the mentoring session.

The NC Rural Center will direct individuals to other programs and lenders like North Carolina Small Business Credit Initiative. The initiative helps traditional lenders make more funds available for start-ups. The Rural Center also has a partnership with Capital Access Network, a state initiative to connect small businesses to capital opportunities.

These connections will be through the private confidential consultation mentoring sessions and through events organized by the Craven Community College Small Business Center. The SBC holds a Panther Pitch business idea competition in which the winner receives \$1,800 in business services. The judges consist of Chamber of Commerce member, local small business owners and a business intermediary. Monthly Roundtable sessions are held for the small business community on various topics including financing. Through networking events, roundtable sessions, and individual mentoring, participants will have a wealth of opportunities to gain resources to grow their businesses.



## LETTER OF SUPPORT

February 7, 2017

Alex Frelier  
Director of the Small Business Center  
Craven Community College  
800 College Court  
New Bern, NC 28562

Dear Mr. Frelier,

We would like to express our support of the Aspire Challenge Grant being submitted by Craven Community College. Our organization is committed to supporting the plight to reduce recidivism and ensuring all resources are available to formerly incarcerated individuals to assist in their success in becoming economically stable.

The Aspire Entrepreneurial Program is a great opportunity for inmates awaiting release back into society and for those currently living in the community with criminal records to become small business owners. We are confident that Craven Community College will lead this initiative efficiently with sustainable outcomes in providing entrepreneurship training, mentoring and support for many ex-offenders desiring to start small businesses in the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Singleton', is written over a horizontal line.

Greg Singleton  
Chairman, NC Craven Pamlico Reentry Council  
[cpreentrync.org](http://cpreentrync.org)