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## Center to help high-tech startups

10/29/2007

### EDC plans to offer firms office space, high-speed fiber optics

By [Keith Lawrence](#)

Messenger-Inquirer

In the past two years, 23 startup companies have been nurtured in the Western Kentucky University Center for Research and Development in Bowling Green, using its office suites and high-speed, fiber-optic infrastructure until they were able to move out on their own.

The Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corp. is hoping its planned Emerging Ventures Center of Innovation on the third floor of the Commerce Center in the Chase Bank Building, 200 E. Third St., will have similar results.

Madison Silvert, vice president for entrepreneurship and high-tech development at the EDC, is director of the Emerging Ventures Center.

"Our hope is that we will become a satellite of the state's Central Region Innovation and Commercialization Center in Bowling Green," he said. "Technically, we don't have an ICC yet. But the organization has welcomed me into the fold. I've been to their meetings and am a member."

"What the ICC does is broaden the scope of industrial recruiting," said Nick Brake, EDC president. "It's aimed at high-tech companies."

Bowling Green's center, he said, "has created more than 300 jobs. One company incubated there for a while and then moved into Butler County and created 200 jobs."



## Contests

No Contests at this time

Brake said: "We're looking for entrepreneurial companies that are likely to scale up. There is already some interest out there. We're talking with two groups that are working with medical devices."

The second phase of EDC's plan, he said, is to find incubator and accelerator space for new companies to grow in.

EDC will rent the space to the companies, Silvert said.

"It will be connected to our local fiber-optic network," he said. "It will be ready for them to move into immediately once it opens."

"Getting something open in six months is probably optimistic," Brake said. "But we hope to have something next year. We have had companies express a need for support and space."

Hugh Haydon, chairman of Kentucky BioProcessing, said last month that that company in MidAmerica Airpark currently has lab space for its clients to use in Owensboro.

But, he said, if KBP is successful in attracting other companies to establish Owensboro offices, it will soon run out of lab space.

"That's where the need for incubator space will come into play," he said.

"We're already identifying possible locations for a business accelerator with science lab space," Silvert said. "We would like to have 30,000 square feet. Ideally, we would have 10,000 square feet of lab space and 20,000 square feet of accelerator space."

Building a new facility is a possibility, he said, "but redevelopment is ideal."

How big is 30,000 square feet? About 7,500 square feet smaller than the former Wyndall's Foodland store on Kentucky 54.

Western's Center for Research and Development has 300,000 square feet in the old Bowling Green Mall, which the university bought in 2001.

Silvert said the Emerging Ventures Center will have office space for SCORE -- "Counselors to America's Small Business," which says it is "a nonprofit association that works with entrepreneur education and the formation, growth and success of small business" -- and Murray State University's Owensboro Small Business Development Center.

"We'll continue to look at manufacturing," he said, "but we want to get some small high-tech companies rooted here before they grow."

They're very good jobs."

The state says the average salary for jobs created by the innovation and commercialization centers is \$56,802.

"I've already met with several clients about using the (Emerging Ventures) center and one is already going through the process," Silvert said.

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