



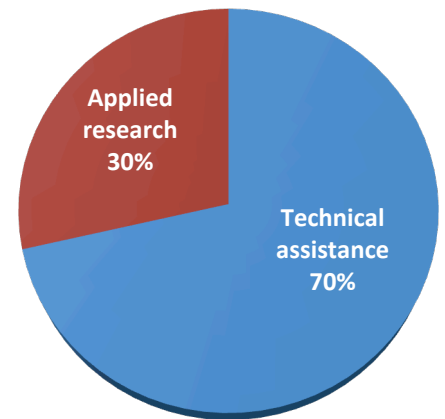
## EDA University Center

### Center for Industrial Research & Service

Iowa State University of Science & Technology's University Center is hosted by the Center for Industrial Research & Service. The Center's work focuses on Regional Trade Centers (RTC), which are typically micropolitan-based regions, composed of numerous smaller cities that are economically linked. The Center uses a data-driven scientific approach to identify and select RTCs with a core population between 5,000 and 10,000 and that have the potential for growth. Then the Center works at the community and business level to develop and implement plans for long-term sustainable regional economic growth. The Center uses the triple bottom line concept to help community and business leaders develop and implement plans with the goal of ensuring sustainable people, planet, and profit in the RTC. Over the past decade, the Center has shifted from a focus on engineering technical assistance to manufacturers to involving regional manufacturing economic analyses to improve direct technical assistance.

### Activities

The Center's main activities fall under its Sustainable Economies Program. This program works with five RTCs and relies on the concept of the "triple bottom line," which integrates environmental, financial, and societal needs. In the program steps, staff develop networks of key regional leaders, help assess economic development capacity and capabilities, and locate economic development



resources. In addition, the staff use data to define the size of the region based on economic and workforce data, determine the industrial drivers, and understand the fiscal capacity of the region. For the triple bottom line assessment, data are gathered on workforce, wages, and quality of life

### University

Iowa State University of Science & Technology

### Center Director

Mike O'Donnell

### Center Location

Outreach Unit

### Center since 1980

### Center Activities

- Regional assessments
- Regional strategic plans
- Improving sustainability and innovation
- Triple bottom line analysis
- Applied research

### Clients

- Regional communities
- Businesses
- Nonprofits

### Assessment Techniques

- Feedback from staff
- Client interviews
- Feedback at regional workshops
- Client satisfaction surveys
- Case studies

### Contact Information

[www.ciras.iastate.edu/eda/](http://www.ciras.iastate.edu/eda/)  
[modonnll@iastate.edu](mailto:modonnll@iastate.edu)

issues for the societal analysis; environmental issues and infrastructure for the environmental analysis; and economic drivers for the financial analysis. In close coordination with regional leaders, an economic development strategy is written for the RTC. Center staff then works with the selected institution and business leaders to develop entity-specific plans to address their triple bottom line sustainability needs. Finally, the Center assists in plan implementation.

### Leveraging

The Center leverages their long history of providing engineering technical assistance to Iowa businesses as well as the network they have built during that history. In addition, the Center leverages university data sources and analytical expertise. In addition, the Center employs graduate student interns who assist on projects for clients and gain expertise.

*“CIARS was responsive and provided knowledgeable, pleasant, and interactive professionals to our project. The analyses they provided gave new insights into the assets of the region, helped us reveal gaps, and/or gave foundation to what we had believed to be true. CIARS was patient in their dealings with our local groups and let the project evolve naturally without inserting themselves into the process. Their work was appreciated by all attendees and CIRAS staff were universally held to be interesting, interactive, and helpful.” -Center Client*

## Success

### **A coordinated and targeted approach for delivering technical assistance to regions, institutions, and businesses**

CIRAS’s Sustainable Economies Program uses a unique, data-driven approach to coordinate technical assistance in a way that addresses each region’s unique vision and long-term economic development needs. After evaluating past Center work in terms of what has and has not been successful, CIRAS has recently changed its focus – instead of only providing one-on-one technical assistance directly to specific companies, the Center is now taking a more holistic approach to providing its technical assistance. The Center’s Sustainable Economies Program, launched in 2010, provides identified “Regional Trade Centers”

in rural Iowa with an in-depth economic assessment of their financial, social, and environmental well-being. The Sustainable Economies Program team selected the Regional Trade Center of Carroll, Iowa, as the first location for this new program. CIRAS analyzed indicators related to the environment, economy, and society, and presented them as a dashboard gauge comparing the county’s performance to peer cities. By combining statistics with visual cues (progressing from orange to green), Regional Trade Centers can quickly isolate environmental, economic, and social assets, strengths, and issues across the major domains. Based on the indicators, the team identified four new approaches to grow the area: business start-up

support through a SCORE chapter, a regional diversity campaign, a new regional marketing approach, and new ways to market employment opportunities.

**Through its holistic approach to economic development that includes industry surveys, economic development planning, strategically targeted assistance, careful engagement with the community, and analysis of data, CIRAS was able to provide a more valuable service to the region than simple direct engineering-based technical assistance.**