



University Center for Regional Economic Innovation

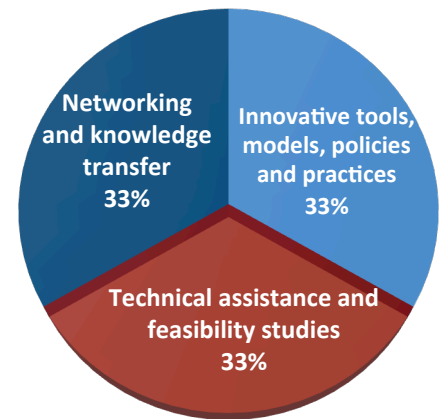
Center for Regional Economic Innovation

Michigan State University's (MSU) Center for Regional Economic Innovation (REI) is working to build a new economic development ecosystem by leveraging higher education assets to support the co-creation, co-application, and dissemination of innovative economic development strategies that will yield high-growth entrepreneurship, job creation, and economic innovation throughout the state. Community engagement, strategic partnerships, collaborative learning, and networking are at the center of REI's approach.

Activities

The REI Network is a responsive virtual community of over 700 members from the public and private sector that are engaged in strategic partnerships and collaborative learning. At the "hub" of this network is a Consultative Panel of 40 statewide knowledge-based and experienced experts, who provide counsel and advice to REI faculty and staff. Six virtual networks – focusing on topics such as regional talent, innovation

infrastructure, etc. – draw membership from diverse stakeholders to leverage higher education resources, build linkages, identify promising economic development strategies, and advance growth and entrepreneurship. Communication in these networks is driven by social media tools such as Twitter and LinkedIn. Through these networks, webinars, and other tools, REI supports peer learning, knowledge transfer, and capacity building to



strengthen the state's economic development organizations and professionals.

In addition to its networks, REI provides technical assistance and feasibility studies to support local economic development via student-led/faculty-guided projects. It supports

University

Michigan State University

Center Director

Rex LaMore

Jennifer Bruen

Center Location

University Outreach and Engagement

Center since 2011

Center Activities

- Applied research
- Technical assistance
- Knowledge transfer and capacity building
- Entrepreneurship support

Clients

- Businesses/entrepreneurs
- Higher education institutions
- Economic development/workforce organizations and professionals
- Public agencies

Assessment Techniques

- Client interviews
- Client surveys
- Informal feedback
- Social media analytics

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co-learning projects between university faculty and partners to identify innovative economic development practices and strategies, and supports applied research and “info briefs” to document local innovation in economic development. REI facilitates knowledge transfer via webinars, social networking, and an annual Innovation Summit.

Leveraging

REI’s formalized network structure allows it to leverage the experience

and assets of other Michigan higher education institutions, economic development organizations, and other experts in an organized and productive way. REI also actively draws upon resources from within MSU, including faculty expertise, data resources, and especially the use of student labor. REI’s co-learning projects are another critical way to leverage resources, as these draw upon the aggregate knowledge and experience of practitioners, scholars, and others to create actionable

knowledge and design innovative development strategies – it sponsors 3-5 of these endeavors each year.

“Excellent, professional, supportive services; prompt responses; and a valuable source of innovation for the region.”

--Center Client

Success

Co-Learning to support garage-basement entrepreneurs

REI supports co-learning projects between university faculty and partners to identify successful tools, models, policies, and practices that advance innovative economic development. In one recent co-learning project, REI has facilitated research on how to support “garage-basement” inventors. Identifying these entrepreneurs and building their interest in working with a university-affiliated organization can be challenging. To overcome these obstacles, REI worked with a few garage-basement inventors to develop a co-learning plan for taking their innovative ideas to commercialization. Through the co-learning endeavor, REI then gathered feedback from the

inventors about where they ran into problems and what types of assistance would help them over those hurdles. REI has assisted this group in building a supportive network among garage-basement inventors, in gaining recognition, and in creating an identity and a logo for the network. REI is now helping the network to organize an inventor expo.

Through its co-learning process, REI is leveraging wide knowledge and expertise to address specific client needs while identifying actionable and innovative economic development strategies.

Social Media to Build Networks

REI is using social media to build its network and to communicate with

its members. It maintains a network of over 700 listserv members and communicates with them through e-mail, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The REI network is composed of six different sub-networks focusing on key topics of importance to participants, and members, including educational institutions, policymakers, business leaders, economic development professionals, and others, who work collectively to identify and develop unique economic development tools, models, policies, practices, and programs.

REI’s strategic use of social networking tools facilitates collaboration and knowledge transfer among diverse partners statewide.