

## Rural Entrepreneurship as an Economic Development Strategy

By Dominique Halaby

### THE CASE OF NAFTA IMPACTED COUNTIES IN GEORGIA

Promoting economic development in rural America can be very challenging. In order to effectively assist entrepreneurs and small business owners in economically challenged counties in rural Georgia with establishing and growing their business, Georgia Southern University developed Georgia's Enterprise Network for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (GENIE). Founded in 2012, GENIE provides a conduit for community and business leaders to engage and access the university services through three methods: mentoring, connecting and training. In three years, the program has assisted over 40 businesses and contributed to the creation or retention of more than 50 jobs. This article discusses and outlines the lessons learned launching the program in five rural counties that were deemed to have been negatively impacted by the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). GENIE received IEDC's Gold Award in Entrepreneurship.

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# rural entrepreneurship

## AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

By Dominique Halaby

### INTRODUCTION

**O**n August 14, 2011, as much of America continued to cope with the effects of the Great Recession of 2008, NBC News anchor Lester Holt brought the conditions of one rural East Georgia community to the national forefront when *Dateline* aired "The Town that Jobs Forgot." The exposé followed the trials of three Jenkins County women as they dealt with the difficulties of the recent economic recession.<sup>1</sup> Much like the rest of the country, the primary culprit for the area's economic woes was the national collapse of the housing and lending markets. The three subjects of the piece included a laid-off worker from a factory that manufactured

windows, a laid-off vice president of a local bank overseeing mortgage lending, and a small business owner running a local restaurant whose customers could no longer afford the luxury of dining out. The stories of these women epitomized the hardship facing many of the residents in East Georgia, and it captured the struggles of economic recovery in rural America.

**L**aunching a new business development program in five dispersed rural areas that have faced historical economic hardship can be a daunting task for any institution much less one located outside the service area. However, the GENIE program has succeeded in being well received by the service communities and is continuing to gain momentum. This has been accomplished because of the aggressive stance the university had on maintaining engagement through mentoring, connecting, and training services.

mized the hardship facing many of the residents in East Georgia, and it captured the struggles of economic recovery in rural America.

Economic recovery in a rural area can be particularly challenging. Life in many of these once vibrant and self-supporting economic centers has been hampered by larger economic forces and policies that inadvertently limit local leaders' ability to formulate a suitable response to the changing economic environment.<sup>2</sup> For these communities that fall outside the normal commuting patterns of a larger urban core, the residents' need for lower priced goods and services, often fueled by weakening economic conditions, results in an increased competition from non-local providers.<sup>3</sup> The effect is often a reduction of available financial resources that shrink the economic base, limit retail activities, and depreciate the public infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

In many cases, the limit on economic opportunity perpetuates a reduction in population, which further constricts the economic base and financial resources in rural communities.<sup>5</sup> No longer are rural leaders simply competing with neighboring communities for resources; they now find their communities victim to the national policies, the global economy, and competition from the larger

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Promoting economic development in rural America can be very challenging. In order to effectively assist entrepreneurs and small business owners in economically challenged counties in rural Georgia with establishing and growing their business, Georgia Southern University developed Georgia's Enterprise Network for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (GENIE). Founded in 2012, GENIE provides a conduit for community and business leaders to engage and access the university services through three methods: mentoring, connecting and training. In three years, the program has assisted over 40 businesses and contributed to the creation or retention of more than 50 jobs. This article discusses and outlines the lessons learned launching the program in five rural counties that were deemed to have been negatively impacted by the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). GENIE received IEDC's Gold Award in Entrepreneurship.

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urban cities.<sup>6</sup> A prime example of policy that has had a direct impact on many rural communities has been the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

### THE PASSAGE OF NAFTA

NAFTA was designed to enhance the movement of trade and enhance the ability of American firms to compete in the global economy. Implemented in 1994, NAFTA is generally understood to have had a number of significant effects relating to variables such as employment, the flow of goods through North America, and even the health of the environment.<sup>7</sup> The intent of the agreement was to encourage competition and open the lines of trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. While it is generally agreed that this effort has been successful, there is strong indication that certain regions of the United States have been negatively affected in the area of employment.<sup>8</sup> Though the number of jobs affected is highly contested, certain states and counties are considered to have been particularly high-loss employment areas. In many cases, this legislation has been found to have an adverse impact on rural communities, particularly those rooted in industries that depend on labor whose workers require little formal training.<sup>9</sup>

### ENTER THE NORTH AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

To mitigate any negative impacts associated with the passage of NAFTA, the North American Development Bank (NADBANK), a bi-national financial institution whose participation by the United States government was authorized through the passage of NAFTA, created a loan and granting arm titled the Community Adjustment and Investment Program (CAIP).<sup>10</sup>

CAIP makes funding available to aid in the creation and retention of private sector jobs in American communities that directly (or indirectly) suffered significant job losses as a result of the passage of NAFTA.<sup>11</sup>

In order for a community to receive CAIP funding, it must be located in a Designated Eligible Area (DEA). DEAs are determined by the CAIP Finance Committee and are comprised of counties along the U.S./Mexico border and those that have experienced significant NAFTA related job losses.<sup>12</sup>

### NAFTA'S IMPACT ON GEORGIA

In Georgia, five counties- Telfair, Wilkes, Jefferson, Jeff Davis, and Lincoln- were deemed to have been negatively affected by NAFTA and identified as DEAs. These counties are mostly noncontiguous and located primarily in

rural areas in Central-East Georgia. From 1993 to 2000, an estimated 22,918 jobs were lost in the state, ranking Georgia as the 12th most negatively impacted state in the nation.<sup>13</sup> Within the five-county DEA, any recovery from these losses was greatly hampered by the recent economic crisis. In 2010 and 2011, the unemployment rate in each of the five-county DEAs has averaged between 10.9 percent and 17.35 percent.<sup>14</sup>

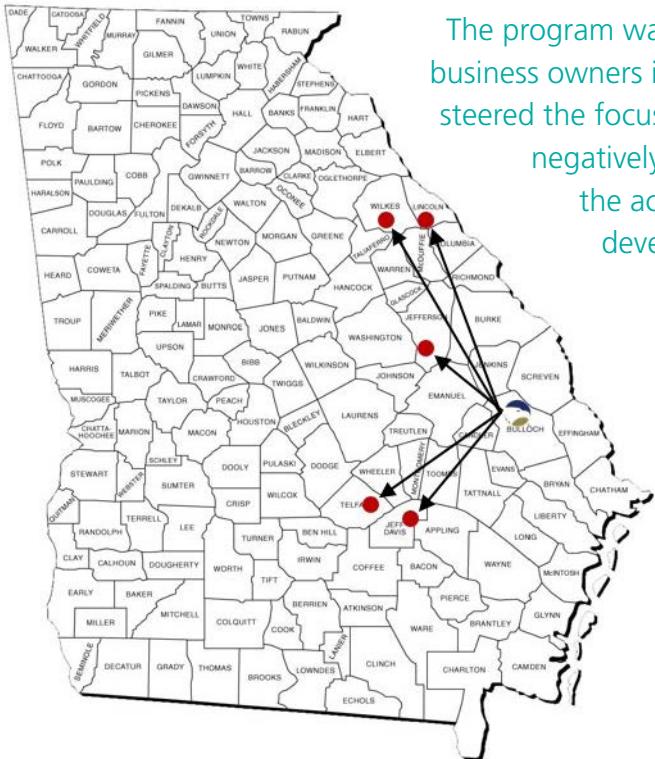
DEA County	Two Year Average Unemployment Rate
Telfair	17.35
Jeff Davis	14.55
Jefferson	13.9
Wilkes	11.9
Lincoln	10.9

Like many residents in rural areas, the businesses and public entities in these areas receive little assistance in the way of technical services, professional guidance, and planning assistance. Though the state does offer several highly regarded programs to develop and grow business enterprises, they tend to be located far away in the state's larger population centers. Resources are typically allocated based on population to ensure there is adequate activity and deal flow.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, businesses located in less populated areas do not have access to the same level of services as those in the state's urban areas. Considering that in rural areas, small businesses are even more important to the sustainability of the economy, this allocation of services can have a devastating effect. Over time, this distribution of services results in a widening of the economic gap between urban and rural regions of the state, making it increasingly difficult for communities, such as those within the DEAs, to maintain a prosperous economy.<sup>16</sup>

### BRINGING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES TO THE AREA

In order to effectively service the needs of the public and private enterprises in the DEAs, the College of Business Administration at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro launched the Georgia Enterprise Network for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (GENIE) in 2012.<sup>17</sup>

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The program was established to assist community leaders and business owners in rural counties, but initial funding from CAIP steered the focus to those communities that were found to be negatively impacted by the passage of NAFTA. As such, the activities of GENIE are focused on the economic development and job creation activities within the five-county DEA.

With over 20,500 students, Georgia Southern University is the largest university in the state south of Atlanta and is located a short distance from each DEA.<sup>19</sup> Though GENIE is a virtual business incubator, this close proximity to the campus greatly enhances the ability of the businesses and community leaders to access the services outlined in the program.

GENIE operates on the premise that a strong and vibrant economy depends on the ability of a community to see new businesses start and current businesses become more efficient. By focusing on activities that help in the creation of new enterprises and improve current enterprise operations, area firms are aided in not only the creation of new jobs but also the retention of current employees.

The goal of GENIE is to promote economic development in rural Georgia, specifically in the five-county DEA. Georgia Southern University does this by providing resources and support for small business owners to grow their business. The program also assists communities in developing an environment that can enable businesses to flourish.<sup>20</sup>

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## ENGAGEMENT THROUGH MENTORING

For many entrepreneurs, having someone to talk with about business processes and challenges can be a powerful form of knowledge transfer and self-reflection. This

GENIE is operated under the Business Innovation Group (BIG), a governing structure that coordinates the efforts of the college's business development and public service components. This includes the area Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Bureau for Business Research and Economic Development (BBRED), and Center for Entrepreneurial Learning and Leadership (CELL).

In April 2013, BBRED received a \$295,927 grant through CAIP to assist U.S. companies doing business in areas of the country that have been negatively affected by the NAFTA.<sup>18</sup> The CAIP grant allowed BBRED to offer the services of a virtual incubator to any entrepreneur located in the five designated eligible area counties at no cost to them. Unlike a traditional business incubator which often requires a business client to be located at the incubator's facility, a virtual incubator places less emphasis on location and more on providing enhanced services. As part of the grant, services of this program were extended to businesses located in Jeff Davis, Jefferson, Lincoln, Telfair, and Wilkes counties.

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In most cases, the mentoring is provided by trained university staff with previous small business experience. However, in cases when the needs of the client extend beyond the capabilities of the staff, a willing business owner in a related, but noncompeting business, is solicited to serve as a mentor. In these instances, it is important that the two businesses not be in direct competition for customers or contracts.

two-way communication often between the entrepreneur and mentor or advisor can help play a key role triggering the business success of the entrepreneur.<sup>22</sup>

It is for this reason that GENIE created the Eagle Mentor program. The goal of the Eagle Mentor program is to provide each GENIE client with the necessary guidance and support to help grow their business.<sup>23</sup> As part of the program, each business client is paired with a mentor or business advisor to help address key issues as they arise and discuss issues that may influence the growth of their business. The advisor or mentor serves as a confidant, with the client as the protégé. The regular communication between client and mentor is often a springboard for addressing business issues as they arise. The client needs to feel as though any issues discussed with the mentor will remain confidential and not be used to place them in a strategic disadvantage.

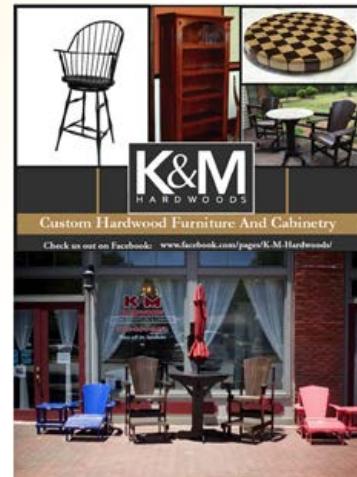
In most cases, the mentoring is provided by trained university staff with previous small business experience. However, in cases when the needs of the client extend beyond the capabilities of the staff, a willing business owner in a related, but noncompeting business, is solicited to serve as a mentor. In these instances, it is important that the two businesses not be in direct competition for customers or contracts. Five businesses have also been connected with mentors in similar businesses but different geographical locations to help give them guidance as they grow.<sup>24</sup>

For instance, in order to assist the client and maintain the integrity of the mentoring program, a pharmacy located in the DEA that was seeking assistance with changes to Medicaid reimbursement regulations was paired with a mentoring pharmacy in a larger community located outside of the DEA and the client's service area.<sup>25</sup> In another case, a small music studio seeking guidance on best practices was paired with a larger music store that maintains a retail outlet, teaches music, and manufactures equipment.<sup>26</sup>

In order to obtain this level of confidence, the mentor is expected to connect with the client at least once per month. All correspondence is recorded in an online client tracking system called Inctrack, either by the mentor directly or the staff advisor that serves in that capacity.<sup>27</sup> This is to ensure that adequate contact between client and mentor is being made and to monitor the client's progress toward performance goals. Advisors, mentors, and GENIE clients have access to the system to record communication and share valuable information such as workshop schedules and procurement information. GENIE advisors have developed and implemented this process as well as follow up plans by utilizing web-based scheduling software. Supervisory staff also utilize the system to maintain accountability and the integrity of the program. Thus far, GENIE advisors and mentors have connected with over 40 businesses and are currently providing services to 23 businesses.<sup>28</sup>

### K&M HARDWOODS

When the GENIE team was first introduced to Steve Gillispie in February 2014, it was evident that he took great pride in building high-quality custom cabinets and indoor and outdoor furniture. However, like many rural businesses, his firm, K & M Hardwoods, suffered from limited exposure to the right client base. Working



with a GENIE business advisor, they developed a plan to update the image of his company and communicate the message to a more targeted audience.

GENIE first worked with him to update the image of his business. He was connected with a university graphic design intern, Ashley Hillman, who created a new logo for his company. She also took professional photos of his products for new marketing materials. The team then provided Gillispie with market research to help him determine the most efficient way to reach his target demographics. His GENIE advisor was able to assist in the development and procurement of marketing material geared toward his target market.

In the first three months of this effort, he has already begun receiving inquiries and orders as a direct result of these combined efforts. Recently, he received an order for over \$6,000 from someone who saw his new pamphlets.

The team is now currently working with him to update his web presence and manage a direct mail campaign. The goal is to help him reach his targeted sales in order to help finance a new workshop and hire more employees.

## BATTLE LUMBER COMPANY



The first big project for GENIE was providing an economic impact study for the Development Authority of Jefferson County to assist Battle Lumber Company with an application for state funding assistance to not only remain competitive, but to also increase production capacity. Advisors conducted the study to determine the economic impact of a new production facility that Battle Lumber was considering building at the time. Using the findings from this study, the Jefferson Development Authority and Battle Lumber leveraged \$11.1 million in private investments to request an additional \$500,000 from the One Georgia Equity grant.

The grant money was used to complete a rail spur for the new production facility. This new infrastructure helped to retain 50 jobs and added 25 new jobs to help meet demand of the new processing center.

Picture provided by The News & Farmer Jefferson Reporter

## ENGAGEMENT BY CONNECTING TO RESOURCES

A key aspect of GENIE is the ability of the program to connect the rural business owners and community leaders with tools that will help understand their economic environment and engage in activities that will lead to businesses (and jobs) being created and retained. This is done by connecting them with information, people, and university resources that have the potential to influence and help understand changing economic patterns and market conditions within the DEA.

This process often begins with a clear understanding of the general economic conditions. Statistics, whether in general to a community or specific to a program, play an important part in understanding the general economic conditions of an area and in developing, implementing, and monitoring regional activities. In order to assist the community in operating on a common platform, GENIE developed an online platform for county-wide economic data.<sup>29</sup>

GENIE uses the existing data publicly available from federal sources, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, County Business Patterns, etc. to streamline access and disseminate data by targeted

area. The system, called dataZoa, was developed by Leading Market Technologies.<sup>30</sup> The software automatically pulls data from select sources as the data are made publicly available. Rather than search records from ten different sources, community stakeholders are able to visit [www.bbred-genie.org](http://www.bbred-genie.org) and readily access data pertinent to the county in a single platform.

Facilitating access to data is important; however, in order for GENIE to be outcome driven, the program must do more than just disseminate information. GENIE must connect rural area community and business leaders with university resources for a specific purpose or to obtain a stated objective. Upon launching GENIE, staff met with development authority personnel, chambers of commerce members, and technical colleges' staff to identify projects that could lead to new businesses, identify business clients in need of other services, and review platforms for skills training.<sup>31</sup> The purpose was to identify programs, businesses, and potential partner entities that stood to benefit from the university's engagement. From these series of meetings and presentations, several projects emerged, including assisting with community branding, providing valuable marketing strategies, and delivering legal and procurement information.

For instance, 12 students from a Georgia Southern University Applied Small Business Management class assisted GENIE clients by administering customer satisfaction surveys, developing employee handbooks, outlining a marketing assistance plan, and compiling basic market research.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, the program made available invaluable research to the designated counties including an economic impact study for Jefferson; retail gap analyses for Wilkes and Lincoln; and a target industry analysis for Jeff Davis. The economic impact study was used in support of a grant to assist a business with a rail spur for a new production facility. This new facility enabled the Battle Lumber Company to retain its 50 employees and add an additional 25 workers.<sup>33</sup>

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The retail gap analyses helped community stakeholders determine what new businesses to target for the area. The reports also helped in identifying expansion opportunities for current area businesses which could aid them in increasing sales.

The target industry analysis identified potential industries that could provide support for existing industries in Jeff Davis County. This study was augmented by additional work performed by three Georgia Southern University Public Relations classes. In total, roughly 75 students developed content and strategies for giving Jeff Davis an online presence. Students presented their suggestions to the director of the Development Authority, highlighting their research of the area and strategies for delivering messages to the intended audience. The Development Authority was so impressed that they worked with several other local entities to contract a professional web developer to utilize the content and strategic direction outlined by the classes to create a web presence for the rural county.<sup>34</sup> Currently under development, this new online presence will give the rural community global exposure to highlight existing industry, projects, awards, availability of space/land, workforce, educational systems, quality of life, and more.

### ENGAGEMENT THROUGH TRAINING

A key aspect of expanding a small business owner's knowledge base, thus enhancing their firm's probability for improving efficiencies and opportunity recognition, is their participation in training and development programming.<sup>35</sup> By participating in training programs, small business owners are able to address workplace deficiencies by acquiring new skills.

For many small business owners in these rural communities, accessing these services is only possible by taking several hours out of their business day to travel to a workshop. Through GENIE, business owners in the DEA are afforded the opportunity to participate in programs that stand to enhance the operations of their business. GENIE clients receive information about valuable workshops that may be conducted outside the DEA. Though no formal mechanism exists to monitor the effectiveness of the training initiatives, business advisors disseminate program information and call the clients to follow up on attendance. For the clients that indicate that they failed to attend, barriers such as time, distance, and opportunity cost are given as the primary reasons for limited participation.<sup>36</sup> Through the sponsoring of fees, facilitating online access or simply recording the session and making the footage available, GENIE is able to make the training sessions available and accessible to a broader audience.

The goal has been to bring the educational services from one of the state's largest institutions of higher education to the small business owners located in the economically depressed regions of the state. By using technology to webcast classes and workshops as well as to record programming, business owners in the DEA have access to several quality training sessions.

### JOINT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF JEFF DAVIS COUNTY

In 2014, the GENIE team partnered with the Joint Development Authority of Jeff Davis County (JDAJDC) to develop strategies for job attraction and retention for the county. The strategy included the development of a target industry analysis and a comprehensive marketing campaign to educate possible expansion or relocation candidate firms of the benefits of doing business in Jeff Davis County. The team conducted its analysis and delivered the findings in early 2015. According to the analysis, the following industries would be complementary and supportive of Jeff Davis' current industries: plastics, resins, and wood windows and doors manufacturers; industrial machinery and equipment wholesalers; and trucking, storage and warehousing. This analysis contained valuable information to assist the JDAJDC in identifying potential industry targets and in communicating the inherent benefits of locating in the area.

In addition, the team connected Illya Copeland, the JDAJDC director, with three Public Relations classes led by Professor Lori



Mallard. During spring semester 2015, 75 students used the analysis as a guide then gathered information about Jeff Davis County, wrote press releases, and developed PR campaigns for the JDAJDC. Copeland is working with an IT team in Jeff Davis to create a web presence for his organization to help recruit or market to potential industries that fit with the analysis' findings. He is also using the students' campaign suggestions to draw local awareness to his organization by holding events like a recent ribbon cutting for a completed rail spur project.

In the time since GENIE presented the student projects and industry analysis, Copeland has been in negotiations with investors that will be a great fit for the area, potentially bringing several new jobs.

However, now in its third year, facilitating the access to training has arguably been the most difficult to implement. Though technology has virtually eliminated the role distance plays in accessing training, the lack of engagement often from in-person course delivery, undoubtedly has limited the true value from the program.

A possible solution to this problem would be live course delivery via video broadcast. However, making live training available is limited by the technological infrastructure in the rural areas.<sup>37</sup>

### LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

In an era of shrinking funding support and increasing need for initiatives to address growing redevelopment needs in rural America, the GENIE program presents a

unique opportunity to assess the effectiveness of new efforts to promote accessibility and engagement. Understanding how a university provides business development services throughout an economically challenged area via distance learning can greatly encourage other institutions to follow suit. In the first three years of the program, several lessons were learned.

First, in order to maintain accountability in such a dispersed area, the program relied heavily on the use of technology to not only disseminate information but to monitor clients' progress toward stated goals and objectives. The team created an online client application form and database, developed an online system for posting business training tools and videos, and utilized video conferencing software and Skype whenever possible. Notes from individual meetings with clients were also recorded using an incubator client management software. This was important to maintain the relationships established in the region, to provide timely responses, and to minimize travel related expenses. Having contacts recorded was also important for tracking and accountability. Because the program used volunteer peer mentors to enhance the applicability of advice offered, it was sometimes difficult to get these mentors to complete notes. In these cases, a staff business advisor would have to follow up and insert comments from both mentor and mentee. This minimized the burden on the peer mentor and maintained the relationship between the advisor and the client.

Second, in laying the foundation within the community, establishing a regular presence in the rural area was very important. Though this is true throughout the project lifecycle, it is especially the case during the launching of the program. Rural areas in Georgia are very relational. In order to establish trust and to dispel any negative connotations with operating as "outsiders," it was important to log adequate "face time" in the community, particularly to educate key community leaders about the program goals and objectives. By establishing relationships with elected officials, city managers, chamber of commerce personnel, economic development personnel, council of government staff, civic club leaders, etc., GENIE staff were able to market the program to a broad cross section of county stakeholders. This aided in creating opportunities for lead generation through county stakeholders, such as securing the names of those that file for a new business license from the city clerks.

Third, in relation to establishing a local presence it was also important to leverage the relationships that developed. Initial efforts to market programs and services were met with marginal results. The most effective means of generating leads and securing clients and program attendees was through the personal networks of local stakeholders. The importance of local personal networks underscores the dependence on establishing firm, trusting relationships with key stakeholders. Their connection and belief in the program helps fuel services and the achievement of desired outcomes.

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Finally, it was important to operate with a clear vision and purpose but also maintain a broad interpretation of outcomes and expectations. For example, in business development circles it is common to view equity and debt financing as a suitable measure for capital access. However, with tightening lending restrictions and few firms eligible for venture capital, GENIE has aided firms in pursuing alternative funding strategies. For instance, GENIE staff assisted a large employer in securing grant assistance from a state agency to support the development of a new facility to expand their operations.<sup>38</sup> The broader interpretation of capital access has enabled GENIE clients to extend the connection to a university in support of grant making activities. This is in addition to assisting with preparation of loan applications more traditionally seen in programs with a Small Business Development Center. Assisting businesses and communities with securing grants for activities that lead to jobs being created and retained, in addition to securing debt and equity funding, has enabled the DEAs to add value by engaging with the university.

## CONCLUSION

Launching a new business development program in five dispersed rural areas that have faced historical economic hardship can be a daunting task for any institution much less one located outside the service area. However, the GENIE program has succeeded in being well received by the service communities and is continuing to gain momentum. This has been accomplished because of the aggressive stance the university had on maintaining engagement through mentoring, connecting, and training services. It has been an ongoing process of developing and cultivating relationships especially as key personnel in the communities change positions. However, GENIE advisors have the right mechanisms in place to continue to grow the network and provide valuable assistance that these communities may not otherwise be able to access. Moving forward, GENIE must continue to identify and utilize basic technological platforms to address the key challenges of distance and program scalability. Only by utilizing technology will the program be able to grow to a point suitable enough to have a broader impact on the state economy. ☺

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> NBC Dateline episode titled "The Town that Jobs Forgot." aired August 14, 2011. <http://www.nbcnews.com/video/date-line/45781641#45781641> Retrieved on September 1, 2015

<sup>2</sup> Timothy O. Borich (1994). Collaboration: A Different Strategy for Rural Economic Development. *Economic Development Review*, 18-21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Jim Cavaye (2001). Rural Community Development-New Challenges and Enduring Dilemmas. *The Journal of Regional Analysis & Policy*, 31(2), 109-124.

<sup>7</sup> Carlos Salas, Bruce Campbell & Robert E. Scott (2001). *NAFTA at Seven: Its impact on workers in all three nations*. Washington D.C.: Economic Policy Institute [http://www.epi.org/publication/briefingpapers\\_nafta01\\_index/](http://www.epi.org/publication/briefingpapers_nafta01_index/)

<sup>8</sup> Mary E. Burfisher, Sherman Robinson, & Karen Thierfelder (2001). The Impact of NAFTA on the United States. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 15(1), 125-144.

<sup>9</sup> Cavaye (2001)

<sup>10</sup> NADBANK. (2015). *Welcome: NADBANK-Community Adjustment and Investment Program*. Retrieved September 3, 2015, from Targeted Grant Program: <http://www.nadbank-caip.org/>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>13</sup> Salas (2001)

<sup>14</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics as reported by county by BBRED: *Interactive Map*. Retrieved August 31, 2015, from BBRED Web site: <http://www.bbred.org/interactive-map/>

<sup>15</sup> Bill Prichard and Phil McManus (eds.) *The Land of Discontent: The Dynamics of Change in Rural and Regional Australia*, 2000. University of New South Wales Press Ltd., Sydney

<sup>16</sup> Borich (1994).

<sup>17</sup> Dominique Halaby (2012). *Georgia's Enterprise Network for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Proposal*. Statesboro, GA: Georgia Southern University

<sup>18</sup> Award Agreement between Georgia Southern University Research & Services Foundation and the Community Adjustment and Investment Program dated April 3, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Georgia Southern University student enrollment for Fall 2014 was 20,517 as reported on <http://em.georgiasouthern.edu/osra/student-enrollment-data/>. Retrieved on September 6, 2015

<sup>20</sup> Halaby (2012)

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>22</sup> Miruna Radu Lefebvre & Renaud Redien-Collot (2013). 'How to Do Things with Words': The Discursive Dimension of Experiential Learning in Entrepreneurial Mentoring Dyads. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 51(3), 370-393.

<sup>23</sup> Halaby (2012)

<sup>24</sup> Georgia Southern University Research and Services Foundation (GSURSF), U.S. Community Adjustment & Investment Program Targeted Grant Annual Report (May 29, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>27</sup> <http://incurtrack.com/>

<sup>28</sup> GSURSF Grant Annual Report

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.bbred-genie.org/county-data>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.datazoa.com/about/about.asp>

<sup>31</sup> GSURSF Grant Annual Report

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>34</sup> Conversation between business advisor and Illya Copeland, Director of the Joint Development Authority of Jeff Davis on September 11, 2015, regarding the current status of online presence for JDAD.

<sup>35</sup> Hearing on careers for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the importance of education and worker training for small business: hearing before the Committee on Small Business U.S. House of Representatives, 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, June 2, 2004 <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=purl.32754077965097;view=1up;seq=5>

<sup>36</sup> Conversation on September 8, 2015, with Suzanne Hallman, GENIE Business Advisor regarding the client reasons for non-participation in training offerings.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*

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