

## **The Farrell Center's Next Generation Entrepreneurship Portal**

With the mission of stimulating economic development in the I99 corridor (Centre, Blair, Bedford County), we are developing a model designed to integrate the numerous support functions and resources in the region. Our vision is an entrepreneurship support system with an interface that allows “challengers” (entrepreneurs, faculty, SMEs, etc.) to create a simple profile which is then automatically evaluated by the system to connect the entrant to a subset of functional offices. This intelligent program determines which service provider (IP Office, ABCD Corp, Technology Transfer Office, etc.) is likely the most appropriate to handle a more detailed assessment of the needs of the opportunity. After the “Gatekeeper” service provider is identified, a “case” summary in a standard format is completed by the entrepreneur in cooperation with service provider. Once inputted into the system, the software program delivers the case to a central workspace organized by industry, geography, stage of development etc. The service providers that most closely match the needs of the case are alerted via e-mail to review the profile. All service providers in the network can access the opportunity to add content to the case evaluation and provide perspective and insight (expert commentary) for the entrepreneur in a transparent process. This facilitates innovation through the use of dynamic knowledge management and the power of the entire network.

We have found an abundance of useful websites that offer a comprehensive listing of references to service providers; however these models do not fully take advantage of the “serendipity” found in effective innovation networks. We seek to transfer the burden in accessing the right support services from the entrepreneur to the service providers. The service providers benefit by being able to “segment” their market and specialize in serving certain type of opportunities. This shifts the focus on quality of service rather than quantity of service.

We have considered licensing the software of one of these services as the front-end of our platform, but would still be in need of the back-end development. We have identified potential tools for this more advanced function but continue to seeking a proven open source model that is aligned with our goal of fostering interactive and dynamic evolution of entrepreneurship opportunities.

From our research we have found no such system implemented anywhere. The completion of this project will put Penn State and the Keystone Innovation Zone in a world leadership position in entrepreneurial support systems.

### **Key Considerations to Network Effectiveness**

Building Trust in Virtual Networks  
Industry/University Barriers to Cooperation  
Gaining Buy-in – Innovation Appropriation

Knowledge Mobility  
Security  
Confidentiality  
Neutrality  
Linux Models  
Network Orchestration – Hub – Network Stability