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Great Bend Economic Development Launches CO.STARTERS Program for Entrepreneurs

GREAT BEND – Great Bend Economic Development, Inc. (GBED) will soon offer CO.STARTERS Core, a ten-session, cohort-based program that equips entrepreneurs of all kinds with the insights, relationships, and tools needed to turn business ideas into action.

Drawing from the experience of successful entrepreneurs and startup veterans from around the globe, CO.STARTERS walks creative small business owners through lean, effective business modeling methods in a simple and intuitive way, while connecting them to a supportive community of peers and mentors. Rather than treating a venture like a large corporation and writing a detailed business plan, CO.STARTERS participants are encouraged to build and test small models first. In the process, participants receive real-time customer feedback, update their models to meet customer needs and avoid creating businesses based on incorrect assumptions.

The CO.STARTERS program has a global reach, serving more than 200 communities across the United States, New Zealand, and Australia.

In Great Bend, CO.STARTERS will be implemented and facilitated by GBED. GBED offers a robust and comprehensive path to guide entrepreneurs through every stage of their business journey. The ten-week CO.STARTERS Core program will kick off on April 3rd. This first cohort will meet on Wednesday evenings from 6 pm to 9 pm. The value of the class is over \$2500 with the services and materials included, GBED has been able to have fees subsidized with sponsorships so participants pay \$250. GBED is offering a rebate for participants if they attend 8 of the 10 classes they receive a \$100 rebate. The class size is limited, so apply today.

Lee Ann June, Communications Director for GBED, shared her excitement saying, "CO.STARTERS Core is the perfect piece to add to our classes for entrepreneurs. It walks 'starters' through what they need for sustainability in their business." She went on to say, "CO.STARTERS core beliefs of keeping it simple, community first, and investing in individuals will speak to the creatives, dreamers, and makers in central Kansas. Core fits perfectly in GBED's path for entrepreneurs, between creating the mindset with ICE House and the IGNITE pitch competition"

GBED learned through the first year of IGNITE Rural Business, Barton County's shark tank-style competition, that local entrepreneurs are in the area. They need support, education, and the tools to be successful and sustain growth for their business and the community at large.

Small business remains one of the fundamental economic drivers for local economies and job creation, but these smaller-scale startups have not received the same level of support as their high-growth counterparts. CO.STARTERS aims to narrow that gap.

"If you look beyond Silicon Valley and New York, there are countless communities that are full of talented entrepreneurs, but they lack the organized community support they need to thrive," said Enoch Elwell, CO.STARTERS Founder. "CO.STARTERS provides a structure for these communities to achieve their economic growth goals and gives them an easy way to build the connections they are already trying to grow."

For more information on CO.STARTERS, visit costarters.co. To learn about CO.STARTERS in Barton County, visit www.gbedinc.com/costarters. A link to the Core application can be found on that landing page.

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About GBED (Great Bend Economic Development):

Our goal is to sustain Barton County's long-term economic health and vitality through the retention, expansion, and attraction of businesses and development that enhance property values, increase personal income, and positively contribute to the citizens' quality of life in Barton County.

For more information about GBED visit: www.gbedinc.com, call 620-796-2407, or email marketing@gbedinc.com.

About CO.STARTERS

CO.STARTERS helps individuals and communities thrive through entrepreneurship by equipping them with strategy, tools, and relationships. Building on initial grassroots efforts with small business starters in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the CO.STARTERS network now has an international reach with thousands participating in its programs annually. Since 2008, CO.STARTERS has equipped more than 690 local leaders across 200+ communities, helping more than 12,000 starters move forward with their ventures. The hallmarks of the CO.STARTERS approach to entrepreneur support are investment in the individual, peer learning in a community context, and simple and relatable tools. From the beginning, CO.STARTERS has pioneered a community-based approach to economic development and has played a leading national role in increasing small business success and growing entrepreneurial ecosystems.

