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## ARC Awards SKED Funding to Continue Entrepreneurial Training in Southeast KY

SOMERSET, KY – Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED) has been awarded \$168,944 in Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant funds to continue its successful entrepreneurial training program throughout Southeast Kentucky.

Funding will be used to further develop and implement SKED’s SMARTS 2.0 digital marketing training, designed to give the region’s small business owners the skills and tools they need to market their services and products across the region, state and country, via social media and the internet.

The grant, matched with SKED’s own funding, will be used to assist more than 60 entrepreneurs through training and technical assistance that will result in as many as 10 new businesses and lead to the creation of 50 new jobs across the region in the coming years.

Fifth District Congressman Harold “Hal” Rogers supported SKED’s competitive grant application because he believes in small businesses and the people of southern and eastern Kentucky.

“I often hear from local people who dream about opening their own small business or expanding their current operations. Thanks to SKED and the ARC, they will now have the opportunity to bring those dreams to fruition and create jobs right here at home,” said Congressman Rogers. “Small business owners drive our local economy, so I applaud SKED and the ARC for investing in the tools they need to be successful right here in southern and eastern Kentucky.”

ARC funds will also help further develop the 31-year-old nonprofit organizations’ Small Business Development Program.

This program is designed to help entrepreneurs and small business owners access the specific skills and technical assistance needed to give their business a jumpstart using specialized training and enhancement programs. It’s intended to help them develop larger customer bases and form alliances

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with other business owners that offer comparable and complimentary services and products to “link” small business owners in a cohesive manner creating more economic development impact in communities and across the region.

SKED Small Business Training Specialist Amanda Kelly developed SMARTS 2.0 to give SKED’s Entrepreneurial SMARTS graduates a follow-up course, if you will, to the small business training class. However, SMARTS 2.0 takes the small business owners to a new level of growth and advancement that will give them recognition on a more regional, national and global level.

This 12-hour course is concentrated on utilization of the internet to increase customer base and make online marketing easier and more successful, Kelly said. The program is focused on existing and startup businesses. Topics covered include: getting found online, utilizing Google and social media for advertising, building a website and building an online brand.

“SMARTS 2.0 techniques help product-based businesses to market and sell outside the region and service-based businesses to attract customers from outside the region to their stores,” Kelly explained.

SKED Executive Director Brett Traver said the organization is pleased to have the ARC and Kentucky Department for Local Government (DLG)’s support for this project.

“This entrepreneurial training would not be possible, without the support and funding of the ARC and DLG,” Traver said. “We look forward to working with these small business owners and providing them the services they need to grow their businesses in the region and create homegrown economic development.”

Future SMARTS 2.0 courses are currently being planned to cater to local small business owners’ needs. For more information about the course, contact Amanda Kelly at [akelly@centertech.com](mailto:akelly@centertech.com). For more information about SKED, visit: [www.southeastkentucky.com](http://www.southeastkentucky.com).

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*Formed 31 years ago by Fifth District Congressman Hal Rogers to create jobs in Southeast Kentucky, the economic development organization, based in Somerset, serves a 45-county region in Kentucky. Staff works with business owners, small and large, throughout its service area to identify financing solutions to fund their location, expansion and working capital needs.*