



Building for the Exchange

Dr. Janet Ratliff, Faculty Mentor
Ms. Maddie Dodrill, Graduate Assistant
Brittany Graziani, Alexa Deaton,
Abigail Cooper, and Gabe Barcus



Appalachian
Regional
Commission

Pictured left to right
Front row: Madelyn Mozeleski, Sidney Palla, Alivia Litton, Kenady Vice, Abigail Cooper, Alexa Deaton, Kelly Tanner, Gabe Barcus, Laryn Tackett, and Dr. Janet Ratliff



Pictured left to right
Back row: John Nelson, Cameron Proctor, Kenneth Shaffner, Josh McClurg, Kyler Stewart, Brittany Graziani, Maddie Dodrill, Kelton Crank, Trevor Holderby, and Ashanti Banks

Introduction

As a part of the Appalachian Regional Commission's Appalachian Teaching Project, students in Dr. Ratliff's Fall 2022 LevelUP section of the Business Plan Development course worked on a service-learning project entitled "Building for the Exchange." Morehead State University is located approximately sixty miles east of Lexington, Kentucky, and is nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains and in the Daniel Boone National Forest in Rowan County, Kentucky.

Background

Our project, "Building for the Exchange," is trying to solve a problem that has been progressing for nearly a century. Modern development practices have changed the small business landscape in Morehead. It was once a vibrant downtown core with neighborhoods built around it. A surge in population over the last 70 years has caused businesses to spread across the community. The downtown has been left with empty storefronts, struggling to keep viable businesses. To try to solve this problem, our class was split into four groups and we were tasked to create business plans to fill vacant spaces in the downtown area of Morehead.

What We Learned

Through this class, undergraduate students learned the parts and the processes of creating a business plan in the Appalachian Region. Students in the class came up with 4 businesses:
-*Fresh Start*, a healthy eating option that partners with local farmers for fresh produce.
-*UPS Store*, a United Parcel Service franchise.
-*Breakfast Bakery & Co.*, a dine in breakfast and bakery restaurant.
-*Morehead Outdoors*, a retail store that sells recreation and outdoor accessories.

By creating a plan for these businesses, we were able to learn the processes of management, marketing, finance, and operations. We became aware of resources such as the SBA that entrepreneurs can utilize when creating a business. Through collaboration and communication, we enhanced our teamwork and research skills. Additionally, we acquired a deeper understanding of the history and hardships of the Appalachian region.



Community Engagement

On August 24th, our class traveled to Main Street to visit and tour two possible site options for a future business. Along with touring downtown, we attended the Gateway & Buffalo Trace Small Business Awards Ceremony. While listening to successful entrepreneurs tell their stories, we practiced professionalism and networking. Through our participation, we became part of a 10-county entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Partnership

Downtown Morehead, Incorporated is a local organization that seeks to strengthen and expand the downtown economic base through the recruitment of new businesses and assistance to existing businesses. Their mission is to confirm Morehead as a dynamic regional center by revitalizing the downtown area, while creating a sense of community and providing opportunities for everyone.

