

Fort Worth, TX

Mayor Kenneth L. Barr

Fort Worth Business Assistance Center

In the mid-1990's Fort Worth was facing the results of national defense downsizing. More than 44,000 defense-related layoffs had a devastating effect on our economy. By contrast, in October, 2000, Entrepreneur Magazine rated Fort Worth as the No. 1 place in the country to own a business. In November of this year, Entrepreneur.Com rated Fort Worth #4 in the nation as a high-tech hot spot. And this month Inc. Magazine rated Fort Worth #6 in the 50 Best Largest Metro Areas.

How did we make such an amazing recovery in 5 short years? I'm confident that the Fort Worth Business Assistance Center (the BAC) was one of the keys. Entrepreneur Magazine's rating gave us credit for our ability to "inspire start-ups, encourage expansion of existing firms and limit the risk of failure". And that's exactly what the 13 service providers at the BAC's one-stop shop do.

The BAC structures and operates its programs to address the individual needs of a large, diverse group of local entrepreneurs. This network of business professionals functions as a coordinated team to provide small, minority and women-owned businesses with the best information, training and technical assistance available.

Currently housed at the BAC are:

- Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
- Tarrant County College Small Business Development Center
- Fort Worth Women's Business Center
- Fort Worth Economic Development Corporation
- William Mann, Jr. Community Development Corporation
- ACCION, Texas micro-loan program
- Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center
- Cross Timbers Procurement Center
- D/FW Electronic Commerce Resource Center
- D/FW/Arlington Minority Business Development Center
- Business Information Center
- U.S. Small Business Administration
- Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities

In addition to the professional services of the partners within the BAC, the Center has

developed relationships with all area chambers of commerce. In 1997, we created the Fort Worth International Center, to add an international component to small business development, and we developed the Fort Worth MedTech Center to incubate high-tech start-ups.

The BAC started as a defense adjustment grant-funded activity of the City of Fort Worth. After the three-year grant expired, the Board of Directors formed a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization. Funding for the non-profit is through contracts with the SBA (to operate the Women's Business Center), the City of Fort Worth (with CDBG funds to serve socially/economically disadvantaged populations), the Texas Rehabilitation Commission and Texas Commission for the Blind (to assist persons with disabilities in self-employment programs).

At the BAC, we practice what we preach. Additional revenue is generated through entrepreneurial activities. Rather than ask for donations, we sell products and services - computer training classes, newsletter advertising, and the annual Entrepreneur Expo. Entrepreneur Expo is the first "trade show for entrepreneurs" in the metroplex. Corporations buy sponsorships (Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company is the title sponsor) in the day-long event.

Last year, the theme "Take the Bull by the Horns" brought in 800 participants and 150 exhibitors and generated over \$70,000 in income for the BAC. We anticipate that this year's "Shoot for a Million" event attendance will double. Workshops are presented on two tracks: one for the "emerging entrepreneur" and start-ups and one for the more mature business. Topics include financing, cash flow, marketing, business plans, e-commerce and "Doing Business with the Big Boys". Exhibitors offer products and services geared to small business. The Expo luncheon features the Mayor's Small Business awards.

The BAC's web site (www.fwbac.com) was reviewed in February 2000 by Dallas/Fort Worth Computer Currents magazine: "... the site now boasts loads of original material, including a section devoted to the Fort Worth Women's Business Center... This section



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Program has been running six years

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offers advice on writing business plans and selections from the [BAC's] newsletter, including 'Woman to Woman', a motivational newsletter that advertises upcoming events, roundtable discussions and more. Other new offerings include an easy-to-read calendar of upcoming seminars and events, information on how to get certified in different programs, and of course, more links."

The BAC has been widely recognized for its unique, successful collaboration. In 1997, the BAC was recognized by President Clinton's Chief Economic Advisor as a national model named finalist in the category of "Building Strategic Alliances" of Arthur Anderson's Enterprise Excellence awards. In 1998, the BAC was named "Most Innovative Product of the Year" by the Business Press and "Entrepreneur of the Year" by the Kauffman Foundation. In 1999 the BAC was named "Deal Maker of the Year" by the Business Press and received the SBA's Vision 2000 "Model of Excellence" award for community economic development. We hope this year, the Conference of Mayors Partner America TM will highlight the BAC as a "Best Small Business Practice".