What is EXCEL?

EXCEL was originally an acronym for Experiment in Community Enterprise and Leadership. It developed as an experiment to see if a particular form of education for citizenship, offered to a significant number of community members, could increase the effectiveness of local civic systems and the vitality of rural communities. Each of the early programs was an experiment because it was based on a new and innovative approach to leadership education — locally based, inclusive, future oriented, and participatory — and because each was unique, designed specifically to meet the challenges and circumstances of the sponsoring community. Today, EXCEL is an acronym for Experience in Community Enterprise and Leadership.

Effective citizen leaders translate the knowledge they’ve gained and commitment they feel into hands-on action with participation in meeting the challenges facing their communities. They can convert words and ideas into action — instinctively talk the talk and then walk the walk. They use insights and skills learned in community leadership programs like EXCEL (Experience in Community Enterprise and Leadership) to engage in building community networks, to make well-informed community decisions and to find real solutions to real problems.

What is EXCEL’s Purpose?

EXCEL’s purpose is to increase the capacity of individuals and organizations/groups who can address community problems effectively by mobilizing the human and social capital in the community to common purposes.

EXCEL Helps

• personal growth and self-efficacy
• community commitment
• shared future and purpose
• community knowledge
• civic engagement

How Does EXCEL Work?

EXCEL is a process for community leadership rather than a prepackaged program. What distinguishes EXCEL from other approaches to leadership development is its high degree of flexibility, local control, inclusiveness, and focus on the future of community governance.

Who Participates?

Anybody who wants to develop strategies to help the community and:

• improve his/her ability to work with groups
• discover what influences community politics
• recognize the impact of cultural and socio-economic values on the community
• develop and implement action plans
• participate in community decision-making processes

Each participant is both a teacher and student; EXCEL is an active experience in which participants are responsible for their own learning while sharing their knowledge with others.

What participants are saying about EXCEL:

One-third of Missouri’s counties and communities, over 6,500 citizens, have participated in over 40 locally-based, EXCEL-type leadership programs. A survey of those associated with the various programs revealed the following:

“The local United Way now raises three times as many funds as 3 years ago. Most members of our board are graduates. The board seems better organized, more focused, and makes better use of resources.”

“The county fair was reborn and phenomenal now. Many fair board members were EXCEL participants.”

“The more people know about their community, the better they can understand issues and problems and seek viable solutions.”

“EXCEL helped me to build relationships with other community leaders. Democratic government doesn’t work unless you participate.”

“Racial and ethnic barriers are being crossed.”

“Any project that goes on in the community has EXCEL participants involved. A pool of networkers who call on each other has been created.”

“I learned that we’re all responsible for making our town and county better. We need to get involved in programs and make things happen.”

How Much Does It Cost?

As in any true partnership, the cost is shared. Local funding is necessary to cover expenses such as travel, supplies and general administration of the program. Total costs vary depending on the program that is developed. Participants usually pay fees to cover about one-third of the program. The rest of the operational costs usually come from local firms, organizations, and government groups.

What Difference is EXCEL Making?

Since 1984, over 6,500 citizens from one-third of Missouri’s counties and communities have participated in community leadership programs using the EXCEL approach. Communities investing in an EXCEL program see new and younger people running for public office, more involvement in community activities and organizations, improved community appearance, and boards and commissions functioning more smoothly.

What Does Research Show About EXCEL’s Impact in Missouri?

In a recent program evaluation completed by Dr. Ken Pigg, University of Missouri, results showed the EXCEL program has produced substantial and significant outcomes that benefit the participants and those communities that organize and sponsor EXCEL programs. The outcomes range from aspects of personal growth and knowledge that increase self-efficacy to changes in the number and capacity of the community’s leader cadre and material improvements in the community. The results show that the program produces the intended outcomes.

Partnerships/Resources: Formation of a local steering committee is a critical factor in developing and implementing a successful program. The steering committee is the heart, soul and manager of the community leadership program. A local facilitator from University of Missouri Extension typically provides ongoing support and assistance during the process in collaboration with a chamber of commerce, a community betterment organization or other interested parties.

For more information, contact: Johanna Reed Adams, Ph.D.
State Community Leadership Development Extension Specialist
223 Gentry Hall
Columbia, MO 65211-7040
Phone: 573-882-3978
Fax: 573-882-5127
E-mail: adamsj@missouri.edu
http://www.communitydevelopment.missouri.edu/
“Communities see new people running for public office, more involvement in community activities and organizations, improved community appearance, and boards and commissions functioning more smoothly.”

EXCEL graduate Rick Spencer, Owner, RAMS General Contracting

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL graduate Cameron

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.

EXCEL is an educational tool that showed me how education, community organizations and businesses work together to make the community a better place to live and work. The networking experience was huge! After EXCEL, I now have a better understanding of who to go to in order to get questions answered.