

# CONNECTING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES



## Request for CEC 2025 Breakout Session Proposals (RFP)

**\*DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION: Sunday, March 2, 2025, 11:59 p.m.\***

### About Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities

Entrepreneurial communities are neighborhoods, cities, and counties that continuously work to facilitate economic development through entrepreneurship. They strategically build and grow networks, cultures, resources, and policies that enable invention, innovation, and entrepreneurship to succeed. University of Missouri Extension created the Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities (CEC) program to help communities build and grow these resources. CEC does this by acting as a platform for economic developers, local government officials, and other practitioners to come together to share best practices, learn from successes, and sometimes failures; but, always with the intent to exchange ideas.

### About the CEC Conference

The CEC Conference is offered by University of Missouri (MU) Extension Business and Communities. The CEC Conference is hosted annually in a rural community in Missouri. Hosting a conference offers rural communities throughout Missouri the opportunity to attract participants from Missouri and across the United States who are interested in connecting with and learning from other entrepreneurial individuals. The Conference is an opportunity for small, rural communities to showcase their downtown businesses, entrepreneurs, and other assets to potential investors, funding agencies, entrepreneurs, newcomers, and state organizations.

### Why Should You Submit a Proposal to Present?

We're seeking breakout session speakers and facilitators who can share their knowledge in a way that deeply connects with participants and helps build capacity to drive positive economic impact in Missouri and other communities across the United States! Your expertise, personal experiences, and successful strategies in navigating obstacles and change can have positive impact on your participants, providing them with the tools they need to thrive in an increasingly challenging, global economy. Your session will be 30-40 minutes in length and held in one of the quaint storefronts in charming downtown Excelsior Springs. Your audience will be made up of economic developers, business owners, arts and cultural enthusiasts, government leaders, philanthropists, educators, and those in the non-profit sector - all of whom play a significant role in the success of businesses and entrepreneurial development in rural communities. Sessions are presented on the afternoon of October 1, and during the morning of October 2, 2025.

**The 2025 CEC Conference Theme is *Refresh. Revive. Replenish Your Entrepreneurial Toolkit!***

This theme reflects the opportunity for attendees to reignite themselves and their entrepreneurial journey.

**The 2025 CEC Conference has Four (4) Sub-Themes**

Each of the four sub-theme is informed by a guiding question. Please read through the following themes.

You will have the opportunity to select the theme which best fits your presentation farther down this form.

The CEC Conference planning committee reserves the right to reassign presentations for better fit.

**Theme #1: Rethink/Reframe Your Entrepreneurial Opportunities**

***Guiding Question: How can one get “unstuck” in thinking and doing to be open to opportunities and potential success?***

**Summary:** Rethinking or reframing involves critically evaluating and reassessing current business ideas, strategies, and market conditions to identify new possibilities for growth and innovation. This process can include analyzing shifts in consumer behavior, emerging technologies, and competitive landscapes. It encourages entrepreneurs to challenge their assumptions, explore alternative approaches, and adopt a more flexible mindset. By doing so, they can uncover untapped markets, improve existing products or services, and develop more effective business models, ultimately enhancing their chances of success in a dynamic environment.

**Theme #2: Remove Barriers to Entrepreneurial Success**

***Guiding Question: What are some solutions to common business barriers?***

**Summary:** Innovation can be fostered by removing bureaucratic red tape, reducing financial constraints, and improving access to resources and mentorship. Whether you're a grant-making organization or a financial institution, supporting entrepreneurs through positive thinking and a supportive environment is key. This approach helps them focus on their goals, seize opportunities, and enhance creativity, ultimately leading to greater confidence and sustainable success. Addressing these barriers allows all entrepreneurs, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, to navigate challenges more effectively, pursue their visions with greater confidence, and significantly increase their chances of achieving sustainable success. Inclusive growth is not only beneficial for the individuals involved but also contributes to a more innovative and resilient economy.

### Theme #3: Reignite Your Passion and Purpose

***Guiding Question: How can I maintain my passion for and find purpose in my business in a dynamic and ever-changing 21st Century economy?***

**Summary:** Reactivating entrepreneurial passion and purpose involves rekindling the deep motivations and values that drive business aspirations. It requires reflection on what initially inspired the pursuit of entrepreneurship and reconnecting with those core beliefs and vision. This process can involve seeking new experiences, engaging with like-minded individuals and exploring innovative ideas. By reigniting passion, a renewed sense of energy and direction can be created, one that is empowering and helps to overcome challenges and pursue business goals with greater enthusiasm and clarity. Ultimately, reactivating this passion can lead to more meaningful and sustainable success in one's entrepreneurial journey.

### Theme #4: Reconnect with Your Community to Revitalize Your Entrepreneurial Spirit

***Guiding Question: How can networking and mentorship enhance entrepreneurial opportunities across generations, including Gen Z, while inspiring individuals to thrive and contribute positively to their local communities?***

**Summary:** Networking and mentoring play a crucial role in enhancing entrepreneurship within communities. Networking connects entrepreneurs with peers, experts, and investors, fostering collaboration and creating new opportunities. In contrast, mentoring provides guidance from experienced entrepreneurs to newcomers, helping them navigate challenges and develop essential skills. Together, networking and mentoring create a supportive ecosystem that encourages innovation, strengthens community ties, and promotes economic growth. This benefits every generation and helps maintain both the workforce and overall population of the community.

#### ***Things to note about submitting to present this year:***

- The CEC Conference is fully in-person and will be held in storefronts and at The Elms in Excelsior Springs.
- We discourage the sale of products or services as a focus of your breakout session, but you are welcome to use your logo on your presentation slides.
- We are seeking sponsorships for the 2025 CEC Conference. Please contact Ashley Allen-Brown to discuss sponsorship options.
- Please add names of all presenters.
- Incomplete proposals will not be considered.

The 2025 CEC Conference speaker application process is highly competitive. Carefully read the following questions and answer each question in a comprehensive manner. *The deadline for proposals is 11:59 p.m., Sunday, March 2, 2025. Selected presenters will be notified by Dr. Ashley Allen-Brown via email on or before April 15, 2025. \*Selected presenters will receive complimentary conference registration.* Travel and accommodation costs are to be covered by the presenter(s).

**[Click here](#) to access the online CEC 2025 Breakout Session form or continue with the following hard copy version beginning on p. 4.**

# CONNECTING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES



## OFFICIAL 2025 CEC CONFERENCE RFP (HARD COPY)

Lead Presenter Name

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Lead Presenter Contact Email:

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Lead Presenter Contact Phone:

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Title of Presentation

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Description of Presentation (please limit to 150 words):

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Additional Presenters or Panelists (We respectfully request there be no more than four (4) additional presenters for a total of five (5) presenters per each session.

Name	Title	Organization	Email	Town, County, State

Please provide a short biography for each presenter: (50 words or less)

Name	Biography

Please select which of these themes your presentation relates to: (select all that apply).  
Refer to pp. 2-3 for sub-theme guiding questions and summary.

- Rethink/Reframe Your Entrepreneurial Opportunities**
- Remove Barriers to Entrepreneurial Success**
- Reignite Your Passion and Purpose**
- Reconnect with Your Community to Revitalize Your Entrepreneurial Spirit**

Please describe how your presentation aligns with the sub-theme(s) selected.

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Please describe the format of your presentation (interactive workshop, panel discussion, etc.) and how you will engage the audience in this presentation, (i.e., Q&A component, facilitated discussion, Jamboard, Mentimeter, or other online/interactive quizzes/polls, presentation/direct teaching, etc?)

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What audio/visual equipment will you need to successfully host your presentation?

- Laptop
- Projector
- Other (please specify)
- I will bring my own laptop
- Internet / Wi-Fi access

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Please send a profile photo and brief, 250-word (max) bio for all presenters combined into one PDF via email to Dr. Ashley Allen-Brown at [allen-browna@missouri.edu](mailto:allen-browna@missouri.edu). You may also upload this information to the online RFP. Photos will be used for marketing purposes if your presentation is selected.

Please provide links to any social media accounts you have. If selected to present, we will link to your accounts in our marketing of your session.

Please list as: **Name of social media @yoursocialhandle**. Participation is voluntary.

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Please like, follow, join our CEC Conference social media outlets and share our posts! Click the links below or cut and paste the individual URL into your browser.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MizzouExtensionCEC>

Official CEC Conference Facebook Event Page: <https://bit.ly/EXTCECFBEvent25>

LinkedIn: <https://bit.ly/MUEXTCECLinkedIn>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@CECMUExt>

**Submit your completed form with presenter bios and photos to Dr. Ashley Brown via email: [allen-browna@missouri.edu](mailto:allen-browna@missouri.edu) with subject line “2025 CEC Conference RFP Submission”**

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***Prefer to apply online? [Click here](#) to access the online CEC 2025 Breakout Session form or continue with the following hard copy version beginning on p. 4.***

Thank  
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