



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HELP, local schools, and partner organizations offer countywide student entrepreneurship program

February 21, 2024 (Warsaw, IN) – [Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program \(HELP\) Kosciusko](#) along with nonprofit [Believe in a Dream, Inc.](#), came together to recently launch the first cohort of the Kosciusko Student Venture Challenge, an entrepreneurship bootcamp and showcase for local high school students.

Students from Tippecanoe Valley, Warsaw and Wawasee High Schools are participating in the first cohort of the program, with three business-building “bootcamp” sessions already completed.

“We are pleased to find a practical next step to move forward another HELP project identified as a top priority for the whole county,” said Kosciusko County Coordinator Amy Roe.

The program includes eight 2-hour experiential business bootcamp sessions with a student venture showcase and celebration to close the program in mid-May. Highlights from the bootcamp sessions include: developing initial business ideas, elevator pitches, prototyping, marketing and lead generation, financial goals, peer-to-peer feedback, and more.

“I am thrilled for our students to begin their entrepreneurial journey with the guidance and support of our mentors and volunteers,” said Warsaw Area Career Center Principal Ben Barkey. “Entrepreneurship has been an important part of Warsaw's rich manufacturing history, and it's a privilege for us to offer this experience through our collaborative efforts with Tippecanoe Valley and Wawasee. This initiative not only honors our city's past but also paves the way for the next generation of innovators and business leaders.”

The program is facilitated by Entrepreneur Coach Steve Franks of Believe in a Dream. Along with coaching from Franks and peer-to-peer feedback, students receive guidance and support from mentors in the community.

“Already, the student entrepreneurs who gather with us are starting to make connections with their peers from other schools *and* with mentors from Kosciusko County’s business community,” said Franks. “Our steering committee: Amy Roe of Kosciusko County, Ben Barkey of Warsaw Community High School, Aaron Engbrecht of Tippecanoe Valley High School, Nick Ladig of Digs Advising, and I purposefully crafted the program to foster connections. We want these young (and adult) business leaders to be connected for a long time right here in Kosciusko County!”



The goal of the program is to build the local entrepreneurial ecosystem by exposing students to an entrepreneurial mindset and basic business building principles while they're in high school. The need to better support youth entrepreneurship was identified through the HELP program.

“From this first cohort, we’ll learn what the next steps will be for evolving the program and developing future partnerships,” said Roe. “Along with hands-on learning, we hope this makes entrepreneurship seem less scary, and gives students more tools and confidence for starting and growing a business in Kosciusko County.”

If you're interested in supporting the program financially, as a mentor, or a judge for the pitch competition, please contact Amy Roe at aroe@kcgov.com. For updates on HELP Kosciusko visit www.kcgov.com and follow HELP Kosciusko on [Facebook](#) @HELPKosciusko.

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About the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) in Kosciusko County

The Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) supports communities directly by building capacity, creating a peer network system between communities participating in the program, developing a strategic investment plan and providing access to set-aside funding. HELP is rooted in four pathways: advancing e-connectivity, promoting community wellness, enhancing quality of place, and strengthening local economies.

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