

# Libraries open economic development info centers

---

## Cynthia Scanlon

---

Economic development information centers have been created in 23 Arizona libraries.

The action is part of a statewide effort to include public and community-college libraries as key participants in local economic and community development.

The EDIC program was born out of a 1991 White House conference on library and information services held in Washington through the Arizona Strategic Plan for Economic Development.

"The real purpose of the project is to increase the information resources available to small-business owners and community and economic development professionals," says Nancy Welch, senior research specialist at the Morrison Institute, a public-policy research institute at Arizona State Univer-

sity that is overseeing the project.

According to Welch, the main thrust of the project is to provide up-to-date, easily accessible information to business people statewide, especially in the outlying rural areas where information may be more difficult to obtain.

"We know we are having an impact because the libraries are telling us of the new connections they've made with the business community that they didn't have before," Welch says.

The cost of the program is budgeted at \$100,000 a year, which covers all library materials, training and technical assistance. The money comes from federal dollars that are disbursed through the Arizona Department of Library Archives and Public Records.

The EDIC program has three facets:

- Every participating library, regardless of size, is guaranteed a core reference and "how-to" collection of both print and elec-

tronic materials.

- EDIC supports the training of library professionals not only to better understand their community economic development, but also to develop their collections and programs to meet the needs of the local economies.

- The program is designed to provide ongoing support from the state of Arizona.

"It's still amazing how many people don't know about us, and how many people in the economic development community don't know to refer people to us," says Teresa Landers, head of business and sciences at the Phoenix Public Library.

Arizona is the only state in the nation that has created a network of economic development centers in libraries.

"Other states are watching to see if we will be successful," Landers says. "For once, Arizona is a model."

*Cynthia Scanlon is a Phoenix-based freelance writer.*