

# Community Empowerment Center



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## Community Empowerment Center: Small Business Accelerator for the Developing World

The Community Empowerment Center is an entrepreneurial incubator for the rural and under-resourced. It builds on well-established microfinance models by creating a small business generator in communities that would typically lack access to credit. The CEC would offer five specific resources to CEC participants: workspace, telecommunications, training, solar energy, and funding.

Each Community Empowerment Center is community-born and community-raised. It will be guided and facilitated by a steering committee that is comprised of respected community leaders. Teams of community members will apply to the Community Empowerment Center with a business, project, or program that might benefit from the support and resources of the Center. To be eligible for participation, a team must have equal representation of men and women with equal say in the project's implementation. If they and their idea are selected, the team will begin a mentorship program that will provide them with skills such as computer literacy, program evaluation, financial literacy, and grant writing. Participants will then create a formal project proposal for their concept that will be used in accessing micro-credit loan opportunities. The Center itself can provide collateral to leverage an appropriate interest rate on micro-credit loans and small amounts of seed funding for pilots and prototypes. During their participation in the program, CEC participants will have access to a dedicated workspace with solar-generated electricity, computers, and internet access.

## Community Empowerment Center: Program Theory



## Community Empowerment Study: Budget

The Community Empowerment Center does a lot with a little. Thanks to the generosity of Barefoot College solar energy programs, the pilot projects would be housed in their Rural Electronic Workshops. This cuts down on required cost of initiating a center in the target villages with only solar panels, IT, and seed funding/collateral remaining. Once implemented, the Community Empowerment Center would receive a small percentage of profits from successful participating businesses and organizations.

<b>Project Costs</b>	<b>Estimated</b>
Computers (2) + Tablets (2) + Software	\$1,800.00
Micro-Credit Collateral/Seed Funding	\$2,000.00
Solar Panels (10)	\$1,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,800.00</b>

## Community Empowerment Study: Case Study

The Community Empowerment Center is designed to draw out and implement solutions from the community itself. The best way to describe the CEC is through an example that will likely be the first project to come through the program. The first Center will be in the village of Kandwi in Northeast Zanzibar. It is a fairly small village that relies on subsistence agriculture and some revenue from local markets. Unfortunately, the public bus system was recently rerouted and the village no longer has access to markets in the region. As a result, mangoes that were once sold at these markets are now rotting where they fall. Village elders have grown frustrated with this waste and are considering ways to make mango juice from this surplus.

This is where the Community Empowerment Center comes in. The Center will provide the practical and conceptual skills that will take this innovation from concept to implementation. People in Kandwi have already recognized that mango juice would add value and longevity to the mangoes and might open up new buyers such as tourist hotels. To create the mango juice and derive these benefits, the interested persons could apply to the CEC as a team to create a mango juice processing facility. If they were selected by the steering committee, they would have access to computers, training, and workspace where they could learn best practices and get a better understanding of relevant start-up costs. Through training and research, the team would build an official project proposal and apply for micro-credit loans through the Community Empowerment Center.

# Concept Map

The Community Empowerment Center captures the full potential of microfinance through a 360-degree capacity building incubator for potential credit recipients. The five key components of the Community Empowerment Center can be seen in this concept map:

