

**Latino Entrepreneurs Support:  
Growth Opportunity for Public Libraries**

David Hanson  
Systemwide Services Manger  
Johnson County Public Library  
Overland Park, Kansas

Most people are aware that experts forecast the 2010 US Census will reveal greater cultural and ethnic diversity in the United States. What is less generally known is that immigrant and minority groups are just as likely if not more likely than established groups to take the leap into Entrepreneurship according to the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation's report *Minority Entrepreneurship*. This creates a sizable opportunity to combine two historical strengths of public libraries – outreach and business support. The combination can be a powerful driver that not only gives new possibilities for business librarians, but also places the library at the center of new growth in almost every community. Serving this group has its own challenges. To meet those challenges, libraries need to consider the following key items if they want to serve the Latino business community:

- Commitment to Ongoing Services
- Commitment to Hiring Bilingual People
- Building Key Partnerships

To help illustrate how all these things work, we can use the Johnson County Library's recent expansion in Latino entrepreneur support as a case study of how we came to grips with each of these items.

**Commitment to Ongoing Services**

This is perhaps the easiest of all considerations for public libraries to make. Business Librarians in public libraries are some of the best and brightest minds we have. They often are asked to help burgeoning business owners through the difficult and often time-consuming process of doing industry research, key ratio research, and even assisting with finding relevant demographic information.

Having a person on staff dedicated to serving the business community is absolutely essentially to building a successful bridge to the Latino entrepreneur. After all, they want the same kind of research and access to information that every burgeoning business person does. Often, just like other types of entrepreneurs, they have a finite amount of time each day to work on their business plans. They need to be confident that the person who is helping them is well-versed in business research and brings to the process more than what they could find with just a Google search.

This commitment to service is how the Johnson County Library began its relationship with our current partner – the Kansas City Hispanic Economic Development Corporation (HEDC). This leading non-profit provider of bilingual business development services was presenting the Spanish-language version of the Kauffman Centers FastTrac program and came to Johnson County Library because of the commitment to ongoing service to



access questions can be dealt with effectively by our bi-lingual staff for the benefit of the HEDC client. More advanced questions involve translating the question and answer are handled by our senior business reference staff members.