



## **The Proposed Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship at Reedsburg Area High School**

In our fearless pursuit of initiatives that promise not only to maximize all students' potential but to profoundly shape the future, one proposed project stands out at Reedsburg Area High School: The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. This ambitious proposal seeks to renovate the RAHS Library, large group study hall, and two adjacent classrooms. It transforms them into a dynamic hub geared towards instilling entrepreneurial skills and fostering innovation, among the most essential skills necessary for success after graduation.

### **Why Focus on Innovation and Entrepreneurship?**

The current economic landscape is undeniably shaped by entrepreneurship. Small businesses, which often start as entrepreneurial ventures, play a staggering role in job creation. Nationally, they account for approximately 64% of new jobs, injecting vitality into local economies like Reedsburg and other Sauk County communities. This isn't just a theoretical proposition; it's a statistical reality that aligns with a fundamental truth—that a flourishing small business sector is the bedrock of a resilient and robust economy. Rather than working to break down the silos that have existed for generations in America's high schools, this proposal will make it easier to *connect* them. The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship will encourage cross-disciplinary thinking and projects that will support student work across content areas. Rather than teaching solely through their own content lens, the RAHS faculty will be able to teach—and encourage students—to build connections through the critical contexts of innovation and entrepreneurship.

### **Benefits to Students and the Community:**

The strategic alignment of this proposal with economic trends is crystal clear. The skills acquired through entrepreneurship—critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity—are precisely the skills demanded by the job market of tomorrow. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report emphasizes that by 2025, analytical thinking, creativity, and flexibility will be among the most sought-after skills. The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship positions RAHS as a trailblazer, preparing students not just for jobs but for leadership roles in industries that are yet to emerge. Connecting content area knowledge with innovation and entrepreneurial thinking through authentic opportunities the Center can provide will further develop those important skills. Combined with our potential to renovate and upgrade our career and technology education facilities at RAHS to support our work around career pathways better, the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship becomes the energizing and connecting hub.

According to a recent study by the Small Business Administration, small businesses make up 99.9% of all U.S. businesses, employing nearly half of the private-sector workforce. As we contemplate the creation of the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, we are not merely proposing an educational enhancement but an investment in the economic future of our community. At full implementation, we envision the Center to be staffed with a full-time coordinator in a cost-sharing arrangement with area business and industry partners and Madison College. To complement our programming, we envision hosting events, roundtable discussions, guest speakers, and other programs that would be open to all students, staff, and the entire community. Even further, we envision the Center to be open to the community after school hours as an incubator for new business startups.

### **Envisioning the Facility:**

The existing library would become a collaboration space, with small conference rooms and perhaps a room large enough to fit a class as well. The office space will be renovated to house a "clean" lab, in which students will have access to the most current technology for project proposals, development, and communication. Across the hall, the large group study hall and adjacent classrooms will be renovated to become a fabrication lab where student ideas can be prototyped and brought to life.

### **Connection to the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan:**

The District's vision is to provide a world-class educational experience to all students at all levels, inspiring creativity, innovation, and a desire to achieve greatness. Consider this: Entrepreneurship education has a transformative impact on students from all backgrounds. By providing students with a curriculum that intertwines content knowledge with entrepreneurial thinking and challenges them to innovate, we are sowing the seeds of a future workforce that doesn't just adapt to change but propels it. By creating meaningful and increasingly collaborative community partnerships, we would expand and enhance opportunities for all students.

### **Making the Case:**

America's schools were designed to serve a society that, in large part, no longer exists. Unlike any time in our history, our future depends on our ability to unleash the full creative and innovative potential in every student. Innovative, creative thinking and problem-solving are not just encouraged; they are now required at every level of employment. In essence, this proposal is not just about creating an educational space; it's about cultivating a mindset that leads to the creation of a resilient and robust local economy. Traditional education paradigms are giving way to the imperative of innovation and entrepreneurship, and the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship positions RAHS at the forefront of this transformative wave.

Considering the statistics, the economic trends, and the potential for equitable impact, the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship emerges not merely as an educational facility but as a crucible for economic growth and resilience. It is an investment in our students, in our community, and in our economic future.