

Sohodojo's Golden Leaf Foundation Grant Proposal
Program: "Launching a Small Is Good Business Web – Squirreffeeder.com Pilot"
Project: Business Web Pilot - Participant and Stakeholder Development

Section V. Proposal Summary

Sohodojo is seeking \$37,712 for a project to support the recruitment, selection and start-up of **nine to fifteen rural small businesses** (solo entrepreneurs and "working families") to form the manufacturing, order processing, fulfillment, product design and marketing networks of a small-scale, craft-oriented, distributed, supply chain... that is, **to form a first-of-a-kind Small Is Good Business Web.**

To seed the demonstration Business Web, three to five small businesses will be started **in each of three regions; Western/Mountain, Central/Heartland and Eastern/Coastal.** Concurrent with the recruitment of rural entrepreneurs who start the small businesses participating in the Business Web, Sohodojo will develop a **network of community stakeholders** interested in supporting the demonstration project.

The funds from this grant will underwrite a pilot project publicity campaign, a series of statewide local organizing meetings, Business Web participant interviewing and selection, community stakeholder development and a post-selection press communication recognizing the entrepreneurs and community organizations participating in the Squirreffeeder.com Business Web Pilot program.

The nine to fifteen small businesses formed by rural entrepreneurial individuals and families participating in the Squirreffeeder.com Business Web Pilot will have **an extraordinary support network to sustain their success:**

- The software infrastructure necessary to support these rural entrepreneurs' Business Web will be Open Source and has a home at Sohodojo, an applied R&D Lab committed to support of this business model and its community of users.
- MBA Students with program concentrations in sustainable enterprise and faculty from the State's top-ranked business school are being increasingly engaged in the necessary business research and development to envision, launch and help sustain Squirreffeeder.com as a first-of-a-kind Small Is Good Business Web.
- The "core company" of the Squirreffeeder.com Business Web – responsible for branding, marketing and the web site which implements the Business Web's business model – will be developed as a for-profit business enabling angel and venture investment to be applied to the marketing and sales effort needed to increase demand for the Business Web's products.

By locating the **"dot-com core headquarters" company of the Squirreffeeder.com Business Web in a North Carolina Enterprise Community or Empowerment Zone**, significant private investment incentives come into play. Initially, these EC/EZ incentives may stimulate angel investment in the start-up. When EC/EZ business development incentives are coupled with North Carolina's Qualified Small Business Stock policies, stock options earned through participation in a successful Small Is Good Business Web may be among the most accessible strategies for "self-made" wealth available to rural solo entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Our ultimate goal is to research, develop and support the Small Is Good Business Web model as a "full employment" sustainable life-style. However, this innovative entrepreneurial business model, especially when applied in a "collaborative family" context, has the potential to contribute immediately as a stabilizing factor, by providing opportunities for supplementary income, in rural communities where underemployment and job availability cycles adversely affect family financial stability.

By developing a network of community stakeholders interested in the Business Web pilot and by developing a network of "Small Is Good Business Web pioneers" participating in the pilot, this project will be helping to create a **network of Business Web "hubs" to support the expansion and replication of small-scale, craft-oriented Business Webs throughout the State's rural communities.** As such, the "humble beginnings" of this innovative project could stimulate the development of a far-reaching and high impact model for entrepreneurial rural economic development.