

EDGE Innovation Network and the City of Leavenworth Celebrate Grand Opening of First User-Focused EDGE Innovation Center

By Eric Nelson, EDGE Innovation Center Lead, Leavenworth, Kansas

Working closely with end users to bring relevant, innovative technology to warfighters and first responders quickly is the vision of the Leavenworth EDGE Innovation Center, which held its grand opening in August 2009. Located in Leavenworth, Kan., the fourth center within the EDGE Innovation Network is also the first to be focused directly on end user needs.



Several technology demonstrations were performed at the Leavenworth grand opening event.

“The Leavenworth EDGE will facilitate collaboration between users, customers and EDGE members by harnessing the knowledge resident in those groups and transforming that knowledge into relevant user-centric, human-centered design driven technologies and capabilities,” said Manny

Mora, vice president of Battle Management Systems for General Dynamics C4 Systems. Mora served as the master of ceremonies at the grand opening event.

Mora also told guests that, while the EDGE Innovation Network is only a few years old, it already has a record of success, “This model has a proven track record of its ability to provide revolutionary capabilities to warfighters and first responders in an expedited manner without reliance on the often cumbersome acquisition process. These users can be soldiers or technology users in the federal or state government including firefighters, police officers, SWAT teams and agencies like the FBI or CIA.”

C4 Systems President Chris Marzilli further highlighted the importance of a user-focused center and the strategic decision to locate the center in Leavenworth when he began his remarks by citing a quote from former Army Chief of Staff

Eric Shinseki: “If you don’t like change, you’re going to like irrelevance even less.” He went on to say, “The EDGE concept is all about managing change and maintaining relevance, and being here in Leavenworth affords unique access to the Army’s best and brightest where they train in the art of battle command and share their collective lessons learned about a clever and adaptive adversary.”

The Leavenworth EIC is strategically located across the street from the U.S. Army’s Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, both known as “engines of change” for the Army. In fact, the Leavenworth EDGE is the first step in a vision to develop a Technology and Research Park in the city of Leavenworth.

Long-time supporter of growth and innovation in Kansas, U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), also attended the event. Brownback has a well-deserved reputation for being a resourceful advocate for national defense and has worked tirelessly to address the important role that Kansas plays in preserving liberty at home and defending our interests abroad.”

“Kansas, and particularly Fort Leavenworth, has long been a gateway to new frontiers,” said the senator. “With the Leavenworth EDGE, a new gateway to advanced technology and innovation has opened to solve quickly the real-world challenges facing our men and women in uniform. I’m pleased with General Dynamics’ investment in Leavenworth and excited about future growth potential in this industry,” he said.

Dale Ormond, deputy to the Commanding General of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth - the intellectual center of the Army - commented on the effectiveness of the EDGE model. “The acquisition process in place today doesn’t keep up with the tremendous rate of



EDGE members and customers viewed the latest in technology and products at the 2009 EDGE Innovation Showcase.

technological change,” he said. “The activities the EDGE represents are the only way we can keep up and be most effective so we can see our soldiers come home safely.”

Other special guests attending the event who represented several user communities as well as local government and new and existing EDGE members included:

Randel Zeller, director of Interagency and First Responder programs division within the Science and Technology Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security

Shay Baker, Mayor of Leavenworth

John Armbrust, executive director of the Kansas Governor’s Military Council

Dr. Steve Warren, vice provost of Research from Kansas University

Greg Cecil, director of Development and Corporate Relations from the University of Missouri

Ribbon Cutting Marked Official Opening of First User-Focused Center

After months of planning, construction and anticipation, guests gathered at the entrance of the Leavenworth EDGE for the ribbon cutting, which marked the official opening of the first user-focused EDGE Innovation Center.

Once inside the Leavenworth EDGE, guests were able to see first-hand where industry and academia will apply user feedback to fill technology and capability gaps in months rather than years. Several demonstrations of projects developed in EICs were highlighted on the tour including:

EDGE Knowledge Management System (KMS), which keeps track of member information and the technology gaps identified by customer groups. The tool features the ability to match the members’ technology tool set with gaps the customer has identified.

Land Warrior SIR (Soldier ISR Receiver), which provides situational awareness for soldiers. The SIR adds a new dimension — aerial video via Unattended Aerial Vehicles (UAV). This eagle-eye view makes soldiers on the ground more aware of their surroundings because they can now see the aerial view in their helmet-mounted display.

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- Mr. Dale Ormond, deputy to the Commanding General of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth



Sen. Brownback cuts the ribbon, officially opening the first user-focused EDGE Innovation Center, accompanied by (from left to right) Manny Mora, General Dynamics’ Vice President of Battle Command Systems; Shay Baker, Former Mayor of Leavenworth; Chris Marzilli, President of General Dynamics C4 Systems; and Mr. Dale Ormond, Deputy to the Commanding General of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth

The Dynamic Airspace Collaboration Tool (DACT) uses web services derived in the EDGE and provides the Tactical Airspace Integration System’s (TAIS) with a new capability that allows anyone with a personal computer to see the same view as a commander. This reduces the amount of time it takes to request and approve airspace use.

For more information or to arrange a visit, contact Bobbi Burkett, the Leavenworth EIC coordinator at (913) 651-2026.