communities of innovation

initiatives at work:
renewable energy
pop-up shops
keep it local—generational ownership transfer
capital

Since 1998, alt.Consulting has focused on providing individual entrepreneurs at every stage with the tools and resources they need to succeed. In 2010, when census reports showed continued population losses in the Delta, we knew that we had to do more and generate deeper impact, faster. We began by identifying competitive entrepreneurial opportunities that can be implemented in the Delta.

As we worked in DeWitt, Arkansas to implement the Farm-to-Fuel strategy, we uncovered a deeper community-based entrepreneurial spirit. Increasing numbers of public officials and community leaders expressed interest in "growing their own" businesses. Communities of Innovation was born! In one community the mayor said, "For the first time our community feels entrepreneurs are valued and they see real opportunity." In another community a young person said "I am going to college and didn't think I could come back home and find work, but now I may be able to return home and start a business."

Communities of Innovation uses a parallel approach to economic development in the Delta. As we continue to work broadly throughout our region to assist individual entrepreneurs, we will also work intensively with one community at a time, assisting leaders in developing and implementing comprehensive entrepreneurial strategies and creating entrepreneur friendly places.

The Process

As we designed our new Communities of Innovation process we leaned heavily on our lessons learned throughout our 16 year history, as well as those learned in DeWitt.

Assessment: Our work with entrepreneurs begins with a comprehensive initial assessment which has also become our starting point in each community. Through an exciting partnership with the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, we have been trained in proven community assessment tools. This intensive and short assessment process helps create a specific entrepreneurship plan.

Leadership: Working with individual businesses we tap leaders who will be responsible for implementing new financial and/or management systems. Within communities, we are building an Entrepreneurship Resource Team (ER Team) to manage, guide, and sustain the process. This ER Team consists of five to seven individuals who represent the community. This ER Team is responsible for implementing the community-wide entrepreneurship plan.

Implementation: Just as our work with the individual entrepreneur focuses on implementing new systems, our primary efforts within the community will focus on implementing the entrepreneurial strategies that were identified and that the ER Team will continue to manage long after the initial work is complete.

After hearing about our work in DeWitt, community leaders in Dumas, Arkansas invited alt.Consulting into their town to become the next Community of Innovation. Work there began in January 2014.



To download the full report, click HERE.

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