



DELTA CENTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

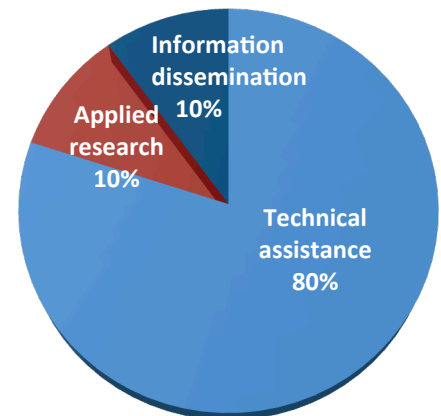
Delta Center for Economic Development

The Delta Center for Economic Development is the Arkansas State University's EDA University Center. Supported by the grant, matching funds from the University, and a partner organization, the director leads a wide range of outreach activities that seek to promote capacity building for the diversification of the regional economic base and the stimulation of job growth through economic development and technical assistance, applied research, and dissemination of information. The Center targets the chronic economic distress of the Mississippi Delta region of Arkansas. While progress is evident, areas of desperate poverty, high unemployment, and low-wage jobs still prevail in the Delta.

Goals & Activities

The Delta Center provides assistance to regional communities on countywide strategic plans for economic development that address weaknesses and threats and that maximize the use of assets and resources identified as strengths and

opportunities. These communities are small and often cannot attain the critical mass of community capital necessary to be effective or competitive. Therefore, in addition to direct assistance, the Delta Center also provides leadership training on the latest rural economic development concepts and practices such as the identification of emerging and growing innovation clusters.



Because the Center believes that being involved in the community is very important to economic development, it focuses on going out into the community to find and work with champions for economic development. To that goal, the Center provides assistance to regional communities through seminars and workshops on

University

Arkansas State University

Center Director

Alan McVey

Center Location

College of Business
outreach arm

Center since 1989

Center Activities

- Technical assistance
- Economic analysis
- Economic development training
- Entrepreneurship support
- Incubator services

Clients

- Local government
- Regional communities
- Community development organizations
- Entrepreneurs

Assessment Techniques

- Program staff feedback
- Client interviews

Contact Information

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issues related to economic, business, and regional development.

The Center also partners with the wet-lab incubator on campus to provide support to entrepreneurs through activities such as business plan writing.

Leveraging

The Delta Center leverages the analytical expertise of faculty members, especially economists, to help it perform its analysis. Faculty work out of professional courtesy, but

if the project is large and the client has some resources, the faculty member may be paid at much less than the market rate. The Center also leverages students by placing them in internships with companies. The Center leverages the campus EDA-funded technology incubator and the Arkansas Biosciences Institute by partnering with the lab to provide services such as business plans, while the incubator provides the physical location.

Success

Powering Rural Development

The Powering Rural Development Program assists small cities through county-led economic development strategic planning. The project is co-funded by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, which shows regional commitment to the program. The counties receive on-site training, technical assistance, and coaching in organizational development, collaboration, and project management provided by economic professionals from the Center.

Center staff members visit the region and survey the citizens, asking questions such as: What is special about this place? What is new in the county? Are there signs of innovation and risk-taking in the area? How is the Internet

being used in this area of the county? Who are the key groups and institutions in the area that would be willing to partner as goals are developed? The Delta center compiles the results and shares them with the region's steering committee.

Many Delta communities struggle with the planning process and often do not have a comprehensive plan in place. Their planning is too local (small town only), thus they cannot attain the critical mass of community capital necessary to be effective or competitive. The goal of this program is to support the development of a plan to foster a true regional economy by aggregating small communities.